

o·blēk

**WRITING
FROM THE
NEW
COAST**

TECHNIQUE

o·blēk

¹²**oblique** (*o•blēk*) Also: obliquity (*ō•bli•kwītē*) [ad. L. *obliquitāt-em*, n. of quality] **1.** fig. Divergence from moral rectitude, sound thinking, or right practice; moral or mental perversity or aberration; an instance of this, a delinquency, a fault, an error. *c 1422 HOC-CLEVE Jonathas Moral*, By the ryng bat is rownd
We shul vndirstande feith which is rownd withouten obliquitee or crookednesse. **1551 CRANMER Answ. Gardiner** Your book is so full of crafts, sleights, shifts, obliquities, and manifest untruths. **1627 DONNE Serm. xxviii. 283** The perversnesse and obliquity of my will. **2.** Deviation from any rule of order. *rare*.

o·blēk/12

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EDITED BY
PETER GIZZI AND JULIANA SPAHR



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TECHNIQUE

PREFACE: APPROACHING THE NEW COAST

One principle of literary history maintains that when a new awareness of writing appears it must destroy the standards and accomplishments of the existing or antecedent writing. Progress, or at least change, must be destructive first and assertive second. Samuel Coleridge said that the imagination “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate.” Frederick Nietzsche in the fourth book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* prophesied breaking the old tablets clogged with old ideas so that new ideas could emerge. Both Coleridge and Nietzsche were as thoroughly engaged with history as Charles Olson, who in his essay “Projective Verse” (1950) proposed a poetry of open field composition which relinquished linear and classical unities in favor of poems which projected form outward as a function of the energy of generation. This poetry was immersed in the facticity of history, as was the poetry of the previous generation, represented by Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and H.D. The force of Olson’s directives was drastically altered with the emergence of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry in the mid-1970s. The new proposals were based on the work of Wittgenstein and post-structuralist European philosophies, and directed toward a concentration on language itself, individual words, as the primary agency of reference, not on the accumulated meanings of words from centuries of use and misuse.

The poetry and the critical thinking about poetry from the New Coast propose another destructive process, a cutting loose from the writing of the 1970s and 1980s, and then an assertion of independence, attempts to build new structures for the intense necessity of formulating human desires in language. Coleridge, Nietzsche, the powerful modernists Pound and Eliot, as well as Duncan, Olson and the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets all share the desire for defining roots, origins, a means (at times theoretical) for relating to the traditions or lines of literary history. They also share the drive to repossess language, clean it off, as it were, and assert it in its vibrant purity of potential meaning into new linguistic structures. Whatever the terms of reaction, the process of breaking the old forms is as clear in this

2 Preface

new writing as it was in George Braque's putting words into his collages.

The terms of reaction are somewhat different. "The New Coast," of course, is a metaphor full of potential significance. The shores of Lake Erie, where the conference took place, will never be as handsome or as popular as the beaches of southern Europe, but they are inland shores, undefined, awaiting delineation as much as this writing is. A new coast does not have to be menacing, a place suited only for outcasts, rejectamenta from fashionable literary circles. It can be enchanting, inviting to casual visitors and serious explorers alike. But it is new, a place or a theoretical station, where naming, building experimental architectures of many kinds can take place, a symposium where views come together for the next thrust to a liberating position.

The metaphor might be a difference. Throughout the statements in this volume, the theme of tarnished language appears in statement after statement, at times a result of the pressure of political jargon and slick phrase making, at other times the result of the assault of the capitalist economy, or the result of the removal of language from tight personal contact by computers, by technology. The focus of language comes before the focus on ideology, or the focus on literary lines or traditions. Individual authors come into the discussion, like Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Laura [Riding] Jackson, Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, Charles Bernstein and Barbara Guest, for examples, but the reaction against and allegiance with movements is not a cause of contention. This theme of disengagement from the antecedent movements could be taken as a version of the decentering of the writer from the work itself; however, it can also be seen as an ahistorical attitude, a position necessary to gain freedoms of the mind, to be released from what Wallace Stevens called "mind-locked sets." The results produce a contrary (in the Blakean sense) tendency: the questions of identity of self and language, as well as the procedures of writing and thinking about writing run through the statements. The anxiety of identity remains at the fringe of the discussions, while the urgency to articulate a new poetics dominates the center.

The conference that produced these statements and the companion volume of poems began at 11:00 a.m. March 31, 1993 in the Poetry/Rare Books Collection, the State University of New York at Buffalo. There were over 100 people waiting for the readings and the panels to begin. The interest was intense and the attention to the readings and conversation acute. The reading and talking went on at various locations in Buffalo until

2:00 the next morning; and then the round of readings, proclamations of positions, and panel discussions went on through April 3, 1993. The conference had a subtitle: "First Festival of New Poetry." By the middle of the second day, it became clear enough that this gathering was the first chance for this generation, age 35, plus or minus a few years and a few special interests, to speak its mind, to declare positions and define territories, sections of the coast as it were.

Differences turned up more than agreements; but, both the poetry and the critical statements have a direction. Instead of confronting a subject directly, this generation makes up a parable or a version of the subject, and then generates a language structure that is disengaged, abstracted, in the true sense of that word, taken away, as a means of articulating the subject. The parable or fable relates to the subject by inference, not by direct reference. One way to understand this procedure is to say that the strategy, or the model of the language, is more important than the subject matter of the language, that language making dominates. Another way is to say that for the poets of this generation there is not a common subject matter distinct from the question of self, the clarification of the self in language.

The statements in this volume have been divided into sections: "Translation: Word and World," "Constellation: Reading and Refiguring," "Transformation: Spirit and Practice," and "Situation: Subject and Position." Kinships emerge, though consensus does not. The independence of thought here and the articulate intelligence informing these statements declare that the writers attending the conference have produced a cumulative announcement of genuine power. The drive to formulate the poem persists through every stage of literary history.

— Robert Bertholf
The Poetry Collection, SUNY at Buffalo
September 1993

INTRODUCTION

"You think maybe poetry is too important and you like that"

—Frank O'Hara

Generation is a verb. This is the first thing to keep in mind while reading and re-reading, pondering over and arguing with, feeling dejected about and then again enthused by, the statements that make up, and to my mind make so invaluable, the present document. If the experience weren't sometimes maddening, it would be evidence that generation had ceased. If it weren't maddening, it would mean that these acts of address, these partial articulations of desire and of allegiance, had entered a stable state. It would mean they had lost their claim to our ever restless impulse to *make something* of the conditions we are given, that something being of course *poetry*.

If even so brief and arguably incomplete a gathering as the one this spring in Buffalo, to which a number of the statements collected here were, in the first instance, addressed, could produce such a burst of discursive energies, could generate such a welter of concerned and concerted discussion, then the effects of this volume are certain to be substantial. It is not my hope, in these few words of preface, to predispose these effects. Rather, I want only to report some of the effects it has already had, to indicate some of the ways it has come to think in my head during the months prior to its publication, and to risk a response in the hope of generating further ones.

Back in 1907, under circumstances that in many ways differed starkly from those which currently confront us, Yeats noted that "the only movements on which literature can found itself...hate great and lasting things." I take him to mean that, when it comes to cultural work, *negation* is inseparable from *generation*; and further, that in adverse and inhuman conditions (in his case, specifically, the conditions dictated by British imperialism), negation will precede generation, will be its precondition.

It is my contention, in the following remarks, that such a

hatred as Yeats speaks of does animate the present generation, though it is a hatred so thoroughgoing, so pervasive and unremitting as to make the articulation of it seem gratuitous, even falsifying. It is the hatred of Identity. Mistake this hatred and I believe you mistake the entire constellation that is emergent in these pages. Mistake it and you are left with no more than incidental and furtive convergences, faint patterns, weak signals. But recognize it, recognize the multitude of forms it takes—from the most abstract to the most concrete—and you will see that few generations have chosen a greater or more lasting thing to oppose, and in the process risked such consequences, such contradictions, as this one has in its opening move.

Admittedly, the resources for such a project seem at first glance, and given the magnitude of the struggle, rather unbefitting. Indeed, the most direct evidence concerning the existence of a “new coast” may be that so many have found themselves washed up on it. Crevice-mongers, imperceptibles, mistakes, squatters, singular constellations of the minor and the miscellaneous, the oblique and the near-obliterated: so this emergent collectivity appears, even to itself.

But it is in the nature of the defeated to appear so. With individuals, as with movements and communities, with material practices and entire epistemologies, and so with that peculiar assemblage of all those things we call poetry, the defeated will appear eccentric, derisory, without consequence. This is how women appear to men under patriarchy; it is how the greater part of the globe, including Africa and Asia, appeared to Europe under colonialism; it is how writing, as Derrida and the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets have shown, appears under logocentrism; and so, I would argue, do we *all* appear to Capital as it now rushes, apparently unopposed, to close a deal long in negotiation, the deal whereby it at last achieves its dream of self-identity in the purge of its final, potentially fatal impurity—people.

Anthony Kwame Appiah has correctly interpreted Capital’s dream to be that of gazing out over a world in which every element of the real has been turned into a sign, and all signs read “for sale.” That it cannot be our dream, that this dream must be negated, woken up from, opens our acts of generation to a radical, a reconstituted and virtually unrecognizable (to those accustomed to see in it only a long-exposed fakery) *humanism*, one that tears at the fabric of domination and offers, however intermittently, glimpses of a “new coast.”

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More than just a figure of thought, I take the “new coast” to represent a human possibility lodged at the very heart of an inhuman world order. Like all possibilities, this one is fragile. That much depends upon its preservation does not lessen the risk that it will be forfeited. To the contrary. The insistence that things could be different, and the demand that they be made so, entails rethinking the actual from the standpoint of the possible. And this project alone is enough to elicit horror and rage not only from those whose interests are served by the actual organization of society, but also from those who, despite being dominated within that organization, have undertaken at considerable psychical and material cost the bitter task of adapting themselves to their domination.

Horror and rage are subjective responses that can, within certain limits, be altered. More intractable are the objective conditions that predispose individuals to these responses in the first place. Consider, for instance, the fate of a concept central to most progressive intellectuals and cultural workers since the end of the second World War, the concept of “difference.” If I have suggested that the writers in this volume are bound in their common opposition to identity, I have stopped short of asserting that they are therefore “for” difference. My reasoning has to do, precisely, with the conditions in which these writers are working.

To the extent that capital’s need to manufacture and mark “difference” (commodification) while preserving and intensifying domination (its own systemic identity) takes the form of a successfully managed crisis, difference is effectively abolished. As social space is forced to yield more and more of its autonomy to “the market”—where the mundane logic of the commodity dictates that nothing appear except under the aspect of identity—even progressive demands for the recognition of ethnic, linguistic, sexual and other differences are converted into identity-claims and sold back to the communities in which they originated at a mark-up. In other words, what has the potential to be, under other conditions, a complexly differentiated field of possibilities (the social), atrophies within capitalist relations to the point where only one meaningful distinction remains—the distinction between identities-in-abeyance (markets awaiting “penetration”) and Identity as such (penetrant capital).

This generation’s hatred of identity has been fed by the experience of the generations that immediately preceded them. It is the hatred of those who have learned that within current conditions there exists not a single socially-recognized

“difference” worth the having. Observation has taught them that the price of the ticket is as fixed as the fight to which one is admitted—and they are refusing to pay it. This does not mean that all traces of the abstract idiom of “otherness” and “difference” developed in the post-structuralist and multiculturalist discourses have been, at a single stroke, effaced from this emergent discourse. As the following pages attest, every available concept of non-identity (the other, the alien, the amodal, the non- or extra- linguistic, etc.) is employed—but with a sense of dissatisfaction, as though these concepts were not non-identical enough.

And so it is that this “writing from the new coast,” aspiring to be a force in a world coasting with alarming speed to the new right, where xenophobic nativism thinks in more and more peoples’ heads and determines in which direction they will turn their more and more sophisticated weaponry, comes to propose poetry as a practice of non-identity, a means of rescuing the kernal of *emergence* at the core of our emergency. The tenacious and cross-grained commitment to discernment, to telling a difference in order to make one, is perfectly captured by Sean Killian when he writes: “to figure out which threat is promising, and which promise is threatening...this, too, is poetry.” And C.S. Giscombe captures it also when he calls poetry the work, “at once definitive and significantly destructive,” of “coming to terms with the conditions, or bringing terms to them.” Discerning the “promise” of identity as a “threat” and rejecting it; this rejection opening a space in which transformation is finally possible—if I have been using the terms *negation* and *generation* to discuss these activities, the sixth-grader whom C.S. first saw enacting them, first saw *making a poem*, did so no less deftly for his innocence of Hegel or Yeats.

As should be evident by now, poetry as technique here means far more than prosody pursued as an end in itself. Against such narrow aims, these writers put at stake techniques of perception, techniques of cognition. With Emily Dickinson—and against the blackmail of demands for “politics now!”—these writers recognize that microscopes can be prudent in an emergency. They recognize that the labor of discerning the given, in order to negate and transform it, is painstaking and patience-trying *and* unforgoable. All the more impressive, then, if a number of them can also see to it that their analyses are, to wrench a Frank O’Hara line, at least as alive as those of the vulgar Marxists!

The techniques proposed, interrogated and enacted in these

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pages, for all their diversity and splendid rejection of the already-established, the consolidated, the self-identical, nevertheless *intend*—in their common commitment to negation and generation—the emergence of a “new coast.” Techniques of specificity are no less crucial to the task than techniques of totality. Indeed, the two must be employed simultaneously, for through what other means is it possible to grasp the “pure media enhanced pluralism of our age” (Liz Was) together with the fact that “very few people are free” (Andrew Levy)? How else to recognize, as Akua Lezli Hope does, that “while the sheer numbers of people with keys to the kingdom increases, the probability that they’ll unlock the doors, retreats?” How else to pinpoint the contradiction Nick Lawrence identifies when he observes that “as the world approaches the condition of a closed / unified circuit of capital communications, issues of address / position / identity get raised all the more fiercely?” And how else to arrive, as Myung Mi Kim does in a mere five words, at the crux of a global system: “From a bare fist relational”?

It is this “bare fist relational” that strikes me as being contemporary. The phrase suggests what is unprecedented about our conditions; it is the hieroglyph given us to decipher. But as I have already indicated, a hatred such as this generation bears towards Identity, and especially towards the type of identity conferred by the commodity-form, cannot be made from scratch. It has long been under preparation, and perhaps nowhere more concertedly than in poetry.

Walter Benjamin has written that each generation is endowed, in its encounter with the unprecedented present, with “a *weak* Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim.” And though it would be one of the few consolations in choosing to oppose a “great and lasting thing” if history could be counted on to preserve the knowledge and practices of those who engaged the struggle before you, we know this not to be the case. The task of returning the traces of a “tradition” to collective memory and effective history demands a constantly renewed attention and a knowledge of the stakes involved. As Benjamin also wrote, “Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.”

Two traditions, or two facets of a single tradition that is only slowly becoming recognizable as such, converge in the writings collected here. One is the consciously recognized and

masterfully renewed tradition of radical linguistic practice that stretches back at least to the beginning of the twentieth century. It has been called the “revolution of the word.” The other is the tradition of radical social practice that took a decisive turn in the period of decolonization following the second World War. Call this the “revolution of the world,” as yet incomplete.

With the advent, in the 1920s, of the second wave of technological mass mediation (the printing press having occasioned the first), poetry underwent a transformation. It ceased to be in any important respect an elite discourse and became irremediably and unregrettably a queer one. Brecht and Shklovsky gave the transformation its conceptual expression (both the German and the Russian—*verfremdungen* and *ostranenie*—are aptly translated by the English transitive verb “to queer”) and Stein had already written the slogan in 1914: “act so that there is no use in a centre.”

From that point forward, the elective affinity between poetry and critical thought comes to produce an unbroken, if somewhat subterranean, tradition within American poetry. Against a backdrop of “total mobilization of all media for the defense of established reality” (Marcuse), radical linguistic practice has worked to contest not only the way specific narratives participate in the reproduction of social reality, they have contested *narrative* itself. In refusing the attenuation of human sense-making that comes of equating it exclusively with “telling stories,” such practices interrupt the norming of cognition. They re-introduce *negativity* into a life-world from which it has otherwise been expelled. And they expose the ideological commitment to narrative for what it is—a restriction of the horizons of the humanly thinkable.

The deliberate extension of this oppositional tradition is visible in these pages. Just tracking the names that occur here attests to that. An extremely abridged list, which is all that space allows, would include, alongside Stein (whose generativity seems inexhaustible), Robert Duncan, Laura [Riding] Jackson, Charles Bernstein, Paul Celan, Jack Spicer, Clark Coolidge, Robert Creeley, Sterling Brown, Keith and Rosmarie Waldrop, Louis Zukofsky, Garcia Lorca, Aimé Césaire, Ron Silliman, Michael Palmer, Barbara Guest, John Ashbery, Susan and Fanny Howe, Bernadette Mayer, John Cage and Amiri Baraka—names by which are noted, not so much identities as inextinguishable flares of “the negative,” openings through which thought can sometimes guide the possible into the real.

The other event informing these writing is, as I have said,

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less well understood as yet. But if more than half a century after Stein's aesthetic injunction to "act so that there is no use in a centre," queer activist and poet Paul Goodman could echo it in the political injunction to "act that the society you live in is yours," it was not chiefly because of developments internal to oppositional poetry. Rather, it was the result of the real negation of colonialism on the part of peoples who had previously appeared to be "the wretched of the earth." It was their decisive appropriation of the human universal that irrevocably shattered the presumptive and hollow universalism of the Western bourgeoisie and opened a threshold through which subsequent liberation struggles would pass.

The effects of this collective act are everywhere evident in these pages. Theorizations of non-identity owe their currency to it. The reconceptualization of history, now seen as a force all are subject-to, none the privileged subjects-of, would have been unthinkable without it. To it we owe the transformations of the terms by which access to literacy and "the literary" are secured, globally as well as nationally. And to it we owe the recognition of the "foreignness of languages" (Benjamin) as more than abstraction. But most of all we owe to it the profound re-organization of imaginably human futures, of non-dominant resolutions to the "brokenness of intersubjectivity" (Habermas) and non-exploitative resolutions to the necessity of reproducing our existence.

It has become commonplace to say that we have now witnessed the reification of liberation politics, that they have been reduced to yet another sign that reads for sale under the rubric of identity politics. Perhaps. But this does not discredit liberation as a project so much as it testifies to the formidable resources of those who oppose it. Perhaps Yeats' insight, with which I began, would be more accurate still if it were inverted to read: the only movements on which literature can found itself *are themselves* the "great and lasting things" that the ruling order must work ceaselessly to contain and negate.

The only thing less plausible than the sudden collapse of that ruling order is its indefinite extension into all imaginable futures. The crisis we present to it *will* become unmanageable, which is why the necessity of imagining alternatives now is such an urgent one. Pessimism and cynicism, the dominant cognitive moods of the past two decades, will no longer serve. As Adorno puts it so memorably, "the world is systematized horror, but therefore it is to do the world too much honor to think of it entirely as a system." I would add, as a corollary, Rod Smith's

prediction that “optimism, about any social possibility” may be the form in which “radical negativity” next appears: “the next punks might believe things will get better.”

The “new coast” is only another name for the increasingly real possibility of overshooting the narrowly contracted band of relations—between bodies, between words, between objects and environments, between worlds—that Capital can annex in accordance with its interests. If the first imperative of politics is to seize control of potentiality, to impose discriminations between the actual, the really-possible, and the merely-wishful, the first impulse of poetry is to contest this imposition. The trick is to fan “small flares of hope” (Steven Farmer) to the point where they burn, “taking up the incandescence which the civil systems shun” (Will Alexander). It is not that the trick is necessarily hard to learn, but rather that the wind which would have fed the fire has up till now blown it out.

—Steve Evans
Providence, R.I.
May 1993

TRANSFORMATION: SPIRIT AND PRACTICE



JESSE ABBOT

A few years ago I was caught on the particular issue of “the poem as initiator or teacher” [Poetics Notes, April ’88.] That is, the “spiritual materialism”tm that accompanies most ventures into gnostic or initiatory territories was going strong in the work, and I somehow persisted in believing in a *palpable* salvific quality that I could apprehend through writing, ultimately to possess it. I’m not sure that I’ve abandoned this scheme entirely, but I’m surer now that any salvation that might be reached cannot be taken ahold of; that the moment in which writer and the (admittedly essential) backboard that is the ongoing text become part of a single fluency...does not in itself stand as any sort of triumph within a fixed progression or teleology.

I asked a few of my students some time ago whether they usually wrote in imitation of, or reflection on, a thought, experience or feeling, or rather for some other purpose. I myself don’t think I’ve ever wanted to write for Poetry or any other single cause, save, perhaps for Gnosis. But, as I was pointedly reminded by the gnostic anti-gnostic Seung Sahn, “understanding cannot help you.” This koan, or maxim, or whatever it may be, will not comprise a saving grace for me; nor do I expect it to, but it provides at least an admonitory context in which I can try to work out my enworldedness. And until I can discern some more fruitful means of doing this, I’m afraid it will have to be in the guise of “poesy.” I specify *guise* because I would like my perspective to be one that is somehow humorously apocalyptic, and in this context there is no time for a poem, but only an agnostic poesis.

WILL ALEXANDER

POETRY: ALCHEMICAL ANGUISH AND FIRE

Two interests: the core of reality in the
one case, language in the
other—... the double
concern of poetry.
—Yves Bonnefoy on Rimbaud

Poetry commences by the force of biographical intensity, by the force of its interior brews, by the sum of its sub-conscious

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oscillations.

It is like a netling piranha spurring the voice with condensed alchemical pain. It is the voice which elusively rises above the perils of a “debased existence,” as a *realia*¹ of flashes, as a *realia* of soaring lightning ramifications. At this level of transparency, the breath takes on movement which is circular, which ceaselessly inspires its own movement, so that phonemes, and words, and phrases, fuse in the superior blood of an incandescent Bengal splendour.

Within this irruption of the igniferous, words are capable of universal poetics; and I mean by universal, possessing the power of pyretic plasticity. In consequence, the language of botany, or medicine, or law, takes on a transmogrified dictation, where their particulars blend into a higher poetic service, in which they cease to know themselves as they were, thereby embarking upon a startling, unprecedented existence.

In the midst of such concentration, if I name “the constellation Dorado,” it is not the same Dorado of the astronomers, or carry the same set of values when placed within a page of rigorously balanced astro-biology. It is a new Dorado, capable at one touch of expansion and utopia. It automatically becomes an enemy of the quotidian, an enemy of fixation and separation. It burns, it takes up the incandescence which the civil systems shun. It becomes a rich imaginal shadow flowing through a verbal lens of miracles. Then there is no longer the dried erradicated stomach of word as use, of word as measuring rod, of word as rational entrapment. The voice then ceases to conclude on a point, or stare at surrounding virtues for approval. It is inevitable, so therefore, the separations, the isolations, the blank tumescent counting patterns, are exploded, much the way contracted stars erupt, giving off new, unprecedented living material for forms of further expansion.

Poetics which reduce, which didactically inform, take on the infected measures of the gulag. During the earlier part of the 1950’s we see the poet Césaire in sustained resistance against this gulag. He takes on the “Communist” party boss Aragon and the latter’s demand for plain spoken diacritics, for abject poverty of description. Instead, Césaire places foremost the unfigurable party, who, like Lautréamont, leaves no traces, leaves no plaintive dots across the wrecked biography of literary law. And it is from this latter example that I gain a powerful internal momentum in using a language in natural combat against ideology, against the popular phrase symbiotic with common herding technique, and sterility.

So for me to erect memorials, to take up with my pen neo-Freudian resurrections, or to give into false anti blasphemous facades, would be to colour myself wretched, locked in a penultimate forgery of the fetid. Of course the scholars would appraise me with their niggling sort of glimpses, they would examine my foot notes, and even in their minuses give me credit for a poetic action or two. But this is not life. This is not the fiery, the musically sumptuous cross-hatching, where the invisible burns, where the angels flare-up, and exfoliate like magic.

There is the ceaselessness, the arcana of ruses, the multiple tonics compressed in an image. From this arises a life of boundless thirst, a life which honors and amalgamates the velvet of the "Imago Ignota," the "obscure," the harmonious "remoteness," taking one on a voyage beyond the clarity of an imprisoning foci of lenses.

Enough with finance, enough with the hunt for allegorical tumors. Poetry explodes the hexahedron, vertically connecting the higher and lower spheres, by the plentiful frictions of anguish and fire.

¹The word *realia* is the Russian equivalent for *reality*, and has two alternative spellings. *realia*, and *realija*. I've chosen it because of the sonorous power of its impact.

MIEKAL AND BEFORE POETRY, BEINGS DREAMING

The word is like the land. No one can own the land. The word & its attendant consciousness, is also a birthright of nature.

— *The Permaculture of Babel*

During the archaic there were no physical & mental restraints, no institutional boundaries around logos & all the slight expressions of the subtle universe. The poet came before Babel, before the enslaught of the printed word. The oracular nature of poet-craft demanded a continuous generation of the visionary state about the unknowable future. A spontaneous mental image bank preceding the actual. The post-industrial world is surely somewhere on a circular timeline preceding Babel, tho maybe not the first Babel. The printed word is even more restrained,

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more limited more than ever reduced to a hollow simulation of its original power as the language of humans. With that as an operational given, a primary agenda among language revolutionaries is to assure that the hierarchy of the printed page becomes obsolete. Its age old blueprint of reading lines of type across the page has resulted in a collective aphasia toward thinking & communicating in any mode other than linear rational. & its very form assumes that all who participate in the text likewise adopt the same world view.

The poem is never finished. Because it is unfinished it is complete in its effective fragmentation of the reader's ability to understand. This confusion leads the reader to substitute bits of his/her own experience for the gaps in the writer's writing. In a western society which hasn't time to sit still, where reading books is a nostalgic fantasy, the short poem is particularly adapted to breaking the meta-linguistic message barrier. It is this form of a condensed reduced info packet which can be found everywhere: on billboards & magazine ads, tv & radio spots, graffiti & posterizing, on buses & in the mail. The same consciousness has hybridized the way we think & how we talk.

Except poetry & fiction have been replaced by "the text" and the practice of any art has enlarged to intimacy with all arts, with an investigation into the culture beneath the culture. Because information & ideas are bombarding our sphere so rapidly the procedure of invention & experimentation is simultaneous with instant printing, rapid communication & the chameleon quality of the artist. More appropriate terms for the new art may be velocity, impact, shifting, compounding etc rather than "this is a good poem, that's a bad painting." Perhaps utility & pleasure are closer specifics. The sensations received & their usefulness completely bypass the critical faculty until they become more than an unconscious reaction.

There are many ways to approach such a dominant paradigm. The easiest for cultural aesthetes such as ourselves is to look to other media & understand the experimentation they have gone thru. Painting would be an obvious example. A tremendous amount of experimentation with painting has reached even grade school level. The same could not be said for poetry. How many grade school kids have made a visual poem, tried their hand at sound poetry, participated in performance poetry. All of these things have been around as long as abstract painting, surrealism etc. From the standpoint of information, there is no reason to maintain formal separation between different

media. In the dreamtime of synesthesia, a world rife with critical dyslexia, an equilibrium of signal & noise are the map of a world vastly different than the aesthetic fortress constructed by 20th century academia. A hyperkultural environment is not described by virtuosity & hierarchy. In an info intensive world, such specialization is clearly not culturally sustainable. Imagination & activity are organized by their appearance & their velocity, by the way that they resonate within the event of media. One no longer resorts to identifying themselves as a poet or a painter since the process of creation endlessly resorts to all available resources.

It is important to not misunderstand this invocation. BEFORE POETRY BEINGS DREAMING is neither a negation of the past nor a condemnation of the academy, but a slight opening in the shift towards the new millennium of possibilities. Apart from the obsessive western aesthetic, an imposing vocabulary of cultural mutation exists, so many choices that many are paralyzed by the volume of options. One inspired & intuitive response is to place these activities into a context different than the accepted routine. When I first began publishing poetry & fiction while in high school, I assumed that the only context for my activities would be to continue thru college & eventually teach & publish in a college setting. That lasted for only a short while before I uplinked with a few of the various networks that sprang up in the late 70s: mail art, cassette networking, visual-verbal lit, computers & performance touring. The networks offer instant access to a world-wide liberated zone—provided one learns the requisite navigational skills needed to pilot one's way toward cultural autonomy. Yet the gradual decentralization of artistic authority, even the rehabilitation of judgment & taste remains confined to the counter-cultural arena.

So, can the text as we know it present us with anything new? The barriers are time & space, two potently charged conditions of our experience. Within that continuum, 20th century genius has pretty much exhausted & played thru the encyclopedia of permutations. Recent computer technology promises a virtual world of hypertext. Instant links with all nodes of information. In the cybertronic dreamtime, space & time are a conceptualized performance. Theoretically, a hypernaut could model any number of dimensions & even create alternative impressions of time. Narrative becomes a footnote to a more contemporary mode of information management. This is the evolutionary crack in 2000 AD that we must walk thru.

EDWARD BARRETT

Light was my daughter's first word I said to Ilona Karmel over beers (she over tea, I under three beers), the novelist whose name is frequently used in the *Sunday Times* Crossword Puzzle because, she says, it has so many vowels in it, misrepresenting rumor of her fame because its efficient cause (Aristotle's sweet phrase, our chief lawyer at the tribunal called wonder) was the disruption of her biology in a death camp. Light, she said with a smile, was Goethe's last word and told me that her husband, Hans Zucker, eminent M.I.T. physicist, had pretty much abandoned his laboratory and theoretical work of the past thirty years in order to explicate Goethe's theory of color, something to do with appearance and essence, the *what is to be seen*, waiting, all around. Lie, lie is what Catie really said, pointing to the light bulb in the hallway of our walk-up apartment, invoking another name under a condition of love and expectation and inability for what she wanted to say and understand. Many things occurred, but one was so removed from the end they had been pointing to that it alone poured its syllables, its letters into the string of boxes replacing the solution to her crossword puzzle with another, more tragic though less surprising one. So all the other clues realigned themselves, changed right before her eyes in the newspaper, even the frame of the puzzle altered (rhomboid to cusp). Too much wrong is part of the sequence, an invisible cord of expectation and result lashed to your wrist, shining like a kiss: this incredible, radiant traction we have—won't it ever learn? The same smile rescued from the underground torture chamber, the million dollar book deal, guest shots on Gerlado and Maury Povich with the biological mother and her ex-con boyfriend trading charges with the professional couple who adopted her, some say kidnapped her? Our poem sits down at the terminal only to discover that someone has rewired the keyboard so that every letter is wrong, yet continues to wordprocess itself, Polish rhyming dictionary and chewed-up baby blocks close by to help with the transcription. And in one of those statistical probabilities you always hear about—a monkey typing for a thousand years—a poem entitled "Feeding Time At The Zoo" appears on the screen, then the complete works of William Wordsworth, followed by (and this is remarkable) a concordance to the complete works of William Wordsworth, with an essay, "Memory, Or the Nick of Time," by John Ashbery. Yet a dreaded power surge erases everything before the files have been saved, and the screen goes blank. Now the

poem lifts its hand and before descending to strike a key, one bony finger crook'd out of a shade-filled hanging sleeve gaping like the mouth of Cornucopia, turns its hooded face, with love, to look at you, to look right through you.

MICHAEL BASINSKI

ARRIBADA

There are some imaginary facts that are central to how I find poetry. First among these is that any poetic I might fantastically present as fact at the beginning of this paragraph will not exist as fact at its end. There is no definable halt once thought enters the frictionless imagination. Besides, definable ends are academic and egocentric, not poetic. As an image of this I'll take a moon, understandable and identifiable or not (a real unreal), and that orb's ever changing celestial adventure. She will be my guide in this poetic course. Consider her, this Moon, as having an unpredictable metastasis, a metamorphosis without end. In this light it is plain stuff: a simple spiritual take on the boundless erotic field and (chance and intuitive chance guided) collage composition. So then gaze on the strut, undulation, camp, vamp, the body flux of this Moon, during a definable (or undefined) eclipse; that relatively short visual procession, it is, imagine, a poem.

The material originates in all fragments of antiquity, shattered temples, broken statues, scraps of papyrus. All of these offer their form, a skin. Expository vases, those in fragments particularly, with their circular, mythically symbolic, narrative, and their mystery, become a course of procession. There is also the utilitarian aspect. The vase (the animal skin, the bark, the word) is a thing to hold something sometimes solid and sometimes liquid. The vessel is a constellation. Within each constellation is the invisible ruler of the spell. Everything has its owner. The matrix is hollow and forms a nice house, the entrance of which is only visible to the genius who lives within. There is created a dynamic unbalance to lead the eye and the ear relentlessly along.

Other markers along the surface are: a given word may have many different spellings; beware of the false premise of the alphabet writing system; voicelessness is a silence in the interaction; literate form is not often located in spoken discourse;

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highly repetitious discourse is a characteristic of ritual activity.

There is an endless cycle of ending and again beginning (Dionysius and Kora) in poetic thrust. Within this great round are passages, secrets and hidden things implied, notes for the beloved only. The information in rooms within this labyrinth is specific to that cup and woven to the all. There is a cosmic ring, one on her finger, one in the bull's nose, a ring of children singing and a rose garden, a rosary. Here and there the graffiti of other writers, "bells bells bells."

Clips of material that reveal themselves as poetics are gathered as rosebuds as they appear. "The angakut use a sacred language in their songs and incantations. A great number of words have symbolic meaning, but others are old roots, which have been lost from common use in the lapse of time. These archaic words are very interesting from a linguistic point of view. Indeed, some are found which are still in use in Greenland, though lost in other dialects, and others which are only used in Alaska.

"I ought to add here that most of the angakut themselves believe in their performances, as by continued shouting and invoking they fall into an ecstasy and really imagine they accomplish the flights and see the spirits."

Duende, wrote Lorca in 1933, "is in fact the spirit of the earth." Duende, to use the common name for a hobgoblin in Yucatan and all Spanish-speaking lands, are "the dark sounds behind which we discover in tender intimacy volcanoes, ants, gentle breezes, and the Milky Way clasping the great night to her waist." To take the prophecy he lay mouth to ground without movement and his speech was thick to hear the prophecy communicated by a hobgoblin. In an early account of a duende (1560) it was noted that the duende spoke in a voice like a parrot and was red in color. There is a class of duende which lurk about ruins and are believed to be incense burners which come to life, particularly at night. "The appearance of the duende always presupposes a radical change of all forms based on old structures. It gives a sensation of freshness wholly unknown, having the quality of a newly created rose, or miracle, and produces in the end an almost religious enthusiasm." There is this association with ceremonial centers.

"I would venture to say that the ear rivals the eye as the primary sense." Let's hear what we can see. Without sound there is no rapport. Words describe sounds or ways of producing sounds which may or may not be. Within Inuit cultures a poem is words infused with breath or spirit. "Let me breathe of it. I

have put my poem in order on the threshold of my tongue."

Tayasal, was first encountered by Hernan Cortes in 1524. "It seems almost beyond belief that Tayasal fell to the Spaniards only in 1697, and that while students at Harvard College had been scratching their heads over Cotton Mather's theology, Maya priests 2,000 miles away were still chanting rituals from hieroglyphic books."

An arribada is an arrival. The term is used with marine reptile activities, particularly that of the Atlantic ridley, a short-shelled, big headed sea turtle. Ridley's forgather in immense assemblages on the northern gulf coast of Mexico. During the arribada more than 10,000 turtles occupy a section of beach less than one mile long. The arrivals occur at wholly unpredictable times. There is a form of music. In this song phrases are not composed of little words chronologically ordered, but of great tight conglomerates within which concepts are juxtaposed and inseparably fused.

MARTINE BELLEN

Moon Day

What could be more ephemeral: as I write a word of explanation, the meaning transforms, as poetry transforms. Mastery. Intentions. Statements. Bourgeois semiological molecular transcendence—diaphanous, distant, exterior. I work in air (the insubstantiality of our job is shoved in our faces by the computer; today, pages and pages of words that never appeared on pages were lost and staring at me on a screen). Among the Igbo there are four days to a week. The pivot day, the turning day of the week is market day, the day the yam comes king and commodity. What is done during the lost three? How do we pass time not named? Quietly. "Keep a good tongue in your head"

I have just completed my second manuscript, *Poems From a Height*, and receive a letter from Peter Gizzi and Juliana Spahr asking me to write a poetic statement or statement on my poetics (I chose the former). An opportunity materializes to outline what occurred during the past two years that has produced this stack of papers by my side, and perhaps a clue to follow which will lead me to the next:

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Sun Day

Working with form informs space so I have a way to go—tunnels, paths. I attempt to follow its outer edges, pushing it, being pulled by it, shadowing it, a private eye. In *Poems From a Height* the forms I adopted, adapted, were the epistolary, the journal and the haibun.

I'm not a letter writer, not a journal keeper. But I am a reader of those written by others. The sealed space and where it takes me, both inside one's life and into one's time. What first attracted me to haibun was Bashō's travel sketches, which read as journal entries—the inner and outer travel or correlation between journal, the day book of journeys which take longer than a *jour*, and the traveling untrip of poetry, the fascination of poetry and where one goes on the most propitious days—isn't that what you're asking? Where did you go and what did you take with you? find? make?

The interplay of prose and verse which is essentially the haibun, two forms of the same substance, side by side, creating the shape of one another, oil on water. Each maintaining its own and affecting that to which it is placed in relation. a perfect couple. Why is it so many journals have spills of poetry beside the prose? How much the two want to come together—but we—the keepers of society say no!, each in your own space, and it is only at night, in our chaos and darkness, in the books we show no one, that we allow them to commingle where they will.

Thursday

The substance within form and form made from the same substance. Water forming ocean. How does it hold its shape? When writing, I attempt to keep my conscious self out of the poem. not dictating what the poem will “say,” not using it as a forum to pour out my thoughts—I don’t want it limited by my mind (pointing to the moon and mistaking it for your finger), for it to be a little larger than I am, more lyrical, older, wiser, visionary (this is what I aim for). For this I choose words, phrases, from books, (journals, letters...) on the basis of what appeals to me, my will and moods. I collect these words on cards, arrange them, rearrange them, change them, let them remain depending on sounds, rhythms, not meaning in a logical sense but harmonically. Where did these words come from and what are they now? (don’t put that money in your mouth, mother scolds, you don’t know where it might have been), another set of meanings.

By keeping my will engaged in the external I make choices that are interactive with what seems to be the world in which I walk rather than reflecting inside my skin or my ideas about who I am. The poem is an object to which I listen along with its other readers, only I put my name to it, and when another rearranges it, she puts her name to it and calls it hers.

It is what we share. the poem.

In Heian Japan, the setting of many of my *Poems From a Height*, the educated shared the poem—the poem was part of the foundation of society. It was their language. In the same way we enter a bakery and ask for bread and are handed a loaf, one would say “For myself, I do not worry” and the listener would think of Ukon’s poem. Where has the bakery gone?

a passage

Saturday

, and perhaps a clue which will lead me to the next—the day before the day of rest

LEW DALY

We are given the chance to bear-forth, through the moment of faith, either an immediate flame lit to love from the trace of its passing-itself in the depths of one's own dispossession of it, or a love set aflame from the passing-itself of the impassable trace that is still neither essence nor strife, but the difference from essence and strife set-apart from the difference of essence from strife by the distance to God. In evidence of the redemption of love from the start, our summation of change is to speak still not less than we seek to retreat or exceed, to repeat what we cannot begin when we can neither defend nor depend upon faith. What we must realize is not that our lot is representative of the fact that the imperishable truth does not, as truth, exist, but that it is symptomatic of the fact that we are capable of destroying the truth. In this realization will lie our awakening to the truth of, which is only, perhaps, the indomitable intimation of, the Infinite in its inherence simply to the heeding of the limits of reason as the limits of reason rather than as the limits that constitute our being limited to reason. Thus the distinguishing of faith from the process of thought is the redemption of change from its being a means of even the most unnatural loss,

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in the power of war, to its being in a state of interminable longing as the loss of self to solicitude. If, that is, in giving credence, we set ourselves the task of bringing-forth a sign, then witness is the holding-forth of a sign of the offering of signs. Keeping in mind that the holding-forth of a sign of the offering of signs is the making of oneself a sign as well, credence and witness are thus the very terms of the distinction we, when we attempt to speak, must make between what is said and the saying of what is said. In words themselves there is always witness to a release-ment of what, without the utterance itself, would otherwise return to God, to nothingness, or turn against the human heart. All difference between the human mind and heart is itself the disembodiment between, and thus the indistinguishability of, a point of departure forbidden the mind from the start, and a point of entry into the heart; but as the very heart of that coincidence of re- and non-embodiment in terms of thought, in words the difference is itself forsaken by the movement of departure from the source, towards the fulfillment of a process from the start. Where the point of departure to an exterior remains indistinguishable from the point of that exterior's access to the heart, that alone, if it's exposed epideictically or indisposed, is the point of a nail the head of which is the distance between oneself and God. For Simone Weil, the affliction felt in the presence of distance transmits this distance—the distance the point of which is one neither of the access to, nor of departure from, the universe between herself and God—so that the universe without returns within herself, but only when, within her heart in which she is thrust down, it marks a distance from herself at which, with her receiving it, the silent too must wait for God. What is at stake is neither the divinity of God, nor the immanence of divinity; but as the very being-within of that conflicted immanence, so too the all but life-like visitant to it, in its exposure to the other edge—to unredeemed duress itself no less in doubt without a cause or end than with redemp-tion of the dead—is still not less than in its coming face to face with God, yet still no more than human sympathy for pain, the very force of our religiosity and love. It is the exposure to the openness of a face for which, in what one says, one steps aside while still sustaining it to let it stay, until our thirst itself has sated fate as we await the drink, and we commence with the breaking of bread. Of this exposure to the face, it is the holding-open that is itself the opening of the "further still" which is incumbent upon the closure of oneself. It is the closing-off in which exposure shores its stores of this forsaken sustenance by

forming words. If they would forgive me, I would attempt to describe what, in the poetry of Susan Howe, of John Taggart, of Elizabeth Willis, of Pam Rehm, I perceive to be a laying-bare of their being far away from Heaven's gate, which is the laying-bare to which their being weighed in the imbalance of the nail of faith assents in sending pain. We are permitted witness to their throwing open of our "being here" to the eternity from which the drivenness of such a nail no less ensues than it induces words. Of the nail the head of which is the entire universe between oneself and God: the point is itself one's holding-open of the distance proved. Peace must be the last articulation of this dearth. Such summoning for which a word must now account comports us forth from heteronomy to non-indifference in the world. On the margin of the mainstream, our poetics, while sufficing in distinguishing its motivations from the desire for indifference at the heart of the conformist poetics of the university and corporate presses, has yet to face the task of justifying its distinguishing of itself, as methodology, before the face of the other—the other's face as distinct from the alterity of the constructed self, and from the materiality of words as what is other. But it must also be said that if, on the other hand, "language speaks," then the house of Being is a gas-chamber. In so far, however, as language, before it is social or cosmic, is dialogue: through the distinction, then, between a form and an address, the address to an other, as distinct from the alterity of any form, bears for at least a moment the weight of the ruinous forms of indifference, destruction, and mastery, by which the human other is perpetually refused. If we cannot escape from indifference through the production of difference, then in differentiating between the meaning of, and the materiality of, our language-use in poems, our task is to also differentiate between the freedom of difference, and the non-indifference of responsibility. Without any diminishment of rights, we must find a way to guarantee our freedom's non-indifferent articulation of itself, which is its articulation as the surplus of our duties over our rights. If the movement from closure to process is the truth of which all irony is the counterproductive lie, then the indifference still remaining at the threshold of the opening-up of closure and the desire for fulfillment—the indifference of multi-national capital and of Capitalism as the only remaining process—must be shattered by a movement of language from a poetics of process, towards the departure of an address to the exterior of language, where, insofar as language, even more than in its being the "house" of Being, is inescapably

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constitutive of it, that exterior is nothing more than the meaning of the fact that the fact that we speak has its basis in the dialogical responsibility initiated not by the speaking of language itself, but by a wholly other calling-forth of the facing of language towards a call, or by the holding-forth of our speaking of language towards the other's face, which is the neighbor's face the call of which is at the same time inscribed-in and prescribed-by its approach irreducibly fixed to the path of solicitude by the awakening of the face to ceaseless pain. For it is in this sense of responsibility—of the ability to respond—that, in the depths of the figure of dialogue cut, from substance of our interment to intentionality, by the departure of language, the meaning of language itself escapes the self-enclosedness of, and hence the relative invalidity of, the systematicity of the meaning that language effects. What is at stake in the decision embodied by a weighing of process itself against the distinction between a process and a departure, is the departure to a distance further from closure than any process. With, on the one hand, the freedom of process under the aegis of the "problem of meaning," we have at the same time forsaken the meaning of language itself, but by a departure from closure and process, the point of departure—the point of the irrecuperably missive, unheeded, immeasurable intimacy of the meaning of language itself with the meaning that language effects—is for Ethics the point of its access to writing and speech; the distinction between a "being able to die," and a "knowing how to sacrifice oneself," is the imperative by which we turn to speak, which is the turn to which departure finally leads. We will say that no God is more forsaken by humanity than the humanity forsaken in God's name. Praise be our hatred of God if as ever our greed were God's claim on the heart. The most significant testament to faith in God is without question the testament to the God by whose command the relation to God can be subordinated to the relation to the neighbor, without compromising the profundity of the relation to the neighbor as a result of the precedence given to it over the relation to God. Thus the God of whom Franz Rosenzweig speaks when he describes the address of the Psalms and of the Song of Songs, is the God in whom my poetry attempts to trust. At any given moment of the poem, at that moment, in the surpassing of that moment by a hope no memory of which is more than life itself the shadow of the death that we have wrought, momentous loss resounds; throughout, but still without, atonement in the poem itself, the loss of once immensest hope admonishes my faith, but a

commandment shatters the page until that forsaking of faith is taken away by a human face.

STEVEN FARMER

A statement on poetics might ask me to write in a voice that isn't my own. I don't write prose because when I do I sound like somebody else, like I'm immediately slipping into genres and tropes that feel adopted and, for me, inauthentic. Poetry is the place where I've experimented until that feeling is no longer there. That it took the first eight years of my writing life to reach this point (to find my own "style") is testament that this practice, so marginalized by mainstream and counterstream art subcultures alike, is not for the faint of heart.

I say this in response to your question of how "the everyday" intersects with the writing of poetry; a central question for most American poets might not just be "how we will write" but "will we write at all"...that the strains of everyday existence (*i.e.*, occupations or lack thereof) might crush our possibilities of actual production is, I think, a very real threat. Some models handed down to us, of Hart Crane, Sylvia Plath and Lew Welch are evidence not just that the poet treads on the brink of madness, staring truth in the eye, but that the poet must integrate the world at large (including commerce and class) with his/her poetics if he/she is to survive. The option of the martyr has been played out. The option of the professor poet in an ivory tower is impotent. Unless we are to read only the works of the independently wealthy, the privileged class, we'll have to come to terms with our livelihoods and our practice.

Teaching careers (in many ways the thinly masked battle-fields for definition of the literary canon) are no longer readily available nor desirable options for poets. This could be a good thing, forcing the writer out into the world, on the front lines, empowering the work with steady doses of "reality." On the negative side of course, our livelihoods infringe on our writing time, often to an insufferable degree. But there are positive aspects to this dialectic: a tension is created in the writing itself which reflects the struggles between "art" and "reality," the synthesis being a somewhat schizophrenic identity, always in flux, which approximates the essence of living in these times.

These concerns comprise for me the present. Against this background my writing concerns itself as well with the past.

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This interplay in poetic time is what makes the work live for me, informed by mostly historical readings, arbitrary but concentrated. My first two books, *Coracle* and *Tone Ward*, were written while I was reading about Mayan Indian history and the Spanish Civil War. My more current work (*World of Shields* and a work-in-progress) is informed by readings of Medieval history and American history of the 1950s and 60s. There is no direct correlation though, between the books I'm reading and what I write. Mostly the reading supplies visual images that I respond to. Historical reading gives me a sense of depth to what I'm doing, but what we finally write has as much to do with whether or not we have a day off to write as it does with what we're reading at the time. These concerns are not "outside" of aesthetics.

There is a spiritual dimension to all this as well. Insofar as any spiritual practice is a quest for discovery, the blank page is the place of unknown. The development of a poetics and the generation of new forms has as much to do with what one doesn't know as it does with what one knows. Lines hang from the margin, almost haunted by the space around them; writing is an encroachment onto an overwhelming field, a gesture that seems to echo against the whiteness all around it, which seems to hold just under its surface all that has ever been said as well as the potential of all that has not.

I'm interested in how this arcane and mostly private practice interacts with the world, which in western culture is ruled by rationality. But poetry is irrational. "I really like it...what does it mean?" It might be small to be a poet standing on a soap box, but from here it seems we're all little dwarves against the vast machinery of our own creation: commerce, the sad human condition. Amazing technological advances are easier for us than the solving of our social and personal problems. What an odd view of ourselves, addicted to the funny-mirror. Rationality makes its call to base human impulses and the lowest common denominator. Let's not make this difficult, every man for himself. The flow of a river takes the route with fewest obstacles. That's physics. I've got a mask. "The facts speak." The delta shifts. It changes its actual physical composition to accommodate the force of an oblivious river headed toward a determined diffusion. You're in the way; but you have culture. The mask doesn't seem to fit...the metaphors adjust...Like the model Camille Paglia identifies: a continuing struggle between Apollonian projection (as manifested in artifice) and the "chthonian" swallowing of these effects by nature....Postmodern poetics have

brought the nature of meaning and expression into question; now its huge task might be more one of assimilation. For a desire to critique/dismantle to a desire to rebuild....

DAVID C.D. GANSZ

NOTES TOWARDS AN INCARNATIONAL POETICS

Embodiment *is*. It needn't take place. We *are*(,)not what we do. So what gets into us? We're peopled with words forming their own relationships, and the spirits need our voice(s)—the inside job (the inscape, not escaping behind the caption or veiled by the ego's cape). The onslaught's to voice ourselves, to hand over the evidence of ourselves ('evidential being'), to read the book of our-selves out(,)loud. The working-out of ourselves *out* of our selves, to rewrite our own bodily constitution—thus *to be* in the presence, to inhabit (not inhibit) the tongue. We can't help *but* incorporate.

What word, then, *are we*(,)looking for? We are here (as we hear) to re-member our selves, to get a *feel* for the language (as) healed *by* flesh, to make a name for ourselves (—the proud insecurity of a name). Thus name is and as destiny. Literally take the word *for* it. Take the 'man' not at but *as* 'his' word, as the prayer is the one who prays (and dance's the dancer). All books lead back to the Self, all dreams to Truth. We're therapeutically retelling ourselves back into being by allowing another of our voices its narration. Poetry's to make, the dream(')s memorable.

The poem is a way of life and a mode of being (as carnal notes 'towards an incar(-)national poetics'): The poem as a liturgical resurrection of Word(s) re-orders (-ordains) the elements—material, linguistic, eucharistic. This carnival of carnage. The annunciatory enunciation (*i.e.* to pronounce our announcement, *not* to de- or re- nounce). Having surrendered the physical to idea(l)s, we seek the re-join(e)d-er. Being given(,) up(-)on the body, we enter the in(n)(')er. Thus the true surrender (in)to being(,)(in)the world, kept(,)in our flesh long enough to perceive and believe.

It *is* our place to say that, to speak out(,)of place. The body is as setting, coloring the grass we stand on, bringing *our* history to/from the soil. Thus re-in-state(d). One, not alone. In(ter)dependent. Where-ever is(,)your habit(at)(?). Place

before person. Re-place, not to get rid of. We're the path we're on. We are the sacrament.

ALAN GILBERT

I am interested in a post-dialectical poetry: a poetry that shatters the distinctions between referentiality and non-referentiality, structure and non-structure, absorption and non-absorption, and also the visible and the invisible. Such categories remain enclosed within a dialectical discourse which both history and philosophy have proven to be a discourse of cruelty.

The departure from the dialectic fundamentally **risks the human**. It does not experience desire as originating in the human, but as forces moving through the human which the hand traces inside and outside of blindness. Thus this departure is inextricably involved with excess. The body shifts spirit in whatever form the latter takes. Relation always displaces. We must, therefore, reconsider the gesture that effaces us, that silently hints at that which always outdistances us.

It is not, however, a question of the spatial, which is bound to seeing; a seeing which, throughout Western thinking, has been the basis and criteria for truth and knowledge. In my own poetry, I am more and more haunted by words and less so by spaces. Paradoxically, this makes writing much more difficult. The emphasis is shifted from the silence of the white page and the silence between bodies to the AHUMAN silence of words and bodies themselves. We might use the example of the pronoun you as opposed to the name.

But even this opposition is not a dialectic, for the radically other stands outside of the dialectic. The excessive compassion, and therefore violence, necessary to remain open to the other threatens us. The other, the you, overdetermines us. It is crucial to stress here that this other can never be an object, for non-ordinary desire is objectless.

We might, then, reevaluate non-referentiality in regards to the exteriority of the other. The foregrounding of non-referentiality in contemporary poetry does not seem to make this movement, this gesture, towards the other; instead it falls far short of the other. It fails to understand that there can be no excess without a productive system. And it inevitably sees its own boundaries and attempts to escape them through an unending textuality and formal pyrotechnics. This consciously

alienating theatricality veils the authorial self, but does not actually **abolish** conventional manifestations of the self; at best it only repositions the self within a closed system of oppression, or a discourse of cruelty.

Silence creates the context in which the cry of the other is heard : the cry as distinguished from the call. The disruption of the dialectic is a movement away from anthropocentrism. This disruption threatens poetry as well. But poetry must go outside of itself if it is to tend to what is outside of us, and if it will continue as a gift given in the extreme.

JEFF HULL

ERGONOMICON

adversary and initiate

to cultivate a conceptual field

the dead of the body

Detach the judgment. Reciprocate an exit from dialectic hypotheses, structures of self-contained spiraling positivism, temporally finite parameterization, concentric evolution.

[spirals of spatial surrender]

A magnetized exterior calls. Paradox turns the armature.

no time like the paragraph

Realize that it was *work* that brings intimacy.

Recover a word from past procedures of language, reiterate within a cultivated spatiality (the “present”). The object of memory contains the living pattern of its originary procedure. A resurrected genetic unit of language as a remote precedent for the present. A witness retrieved for what is about to occur.

Resurrection of deposed extremity. The moment is a duration that offers enduring chance. The burning margin of a passage, the warm odor of the involuntary...

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comprised by reverting reclamation

Will cease to waste what has been. Commerce reinstated between living and defunct transactors.

construction of summoning space

deserted the ranks of ascension

The cultivation of the poem demands a tweaking of hegemony to familiarize the function.

memorial, an exotic acquisition outgrows its area

enumeration of factor to conserve

Alien or merely remote material locates our latent polarity.

Abandoned to the precipitation of an economic sequence.

Submission to an invisible and crucial conversation.

A contextual convergence that is not defined by its signifying surface. The blessing of two or more gathered together in the release of a name.

a blinded excavation

Relation exists as relation to another; it is only truly possible from within the body of a gestalt under the scrutiny of its presencing.

An awareness that destroys the distraction or shelter of a given moment's redemptive obligation.

Obliteration of correlative language within the hegemony of paradox. An encampment of self within an intimate field of language. Specific and peripheral vision, tending not to figure or symbol but to principle; material not correlative but etymologically transmuted.

As vision, the transposed shape of wordlessness

[not signification or representation][not image]

Syntax materializes at the point of rupture of boundaries of self, a dangerous neighborhood where response is demanded.

Seeks to establish an adjacent space, a protectorate for the indeterminate, inevitably complicating.

voodoo gestation

A disorientation that is the truth of peripheral precision.

The poem in this answering of the other. Revelation of spatial orientation.

It is the neighborhood where I dwell face to face with my antithesis.

This vision is a precision which operates by blurring the image of centrality.

you have no artifact

contextualization of the present

The moment of cognizance of avoidance of the face of the unfinished is fixation upon one's own face. This is not the same gesture as resurrection.

A species of narrative characterized by an etymological motility

Conceive of a poem as the meeting place of places liberated from temporality.

Protodramatic. An everydrama. Myth without the correlative. A parable for undermining systemization. All dwellers in prefiguration.

the dead of the body

From a site of silence, subsequent to modes of narrative cognition, convened in historical textuality. The maturation of a bond. Reciprocally alien imperatives impinge. Intimacy consumes as a tear in the texture of figuration, abandoning us at the outskirts of sequentiality, syntacticism, where our only recourse is a leap across a blank into the midst of an invisible

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language. A mode of manifestation or location offered by the precipitation or face of a rift. Contextual syntheses that are not defined by their signifying surface. The blessing of two or more gathered together in the failure of an area.

LISA JARNOT

When I think of poetry, I think of Robert Duncan's lines from "An Essay At War":

So few...nobody
today knows how to make a fire...

What interests me the most about this statement is not an argument as to who those few may be, but as to what the nature of that fire really is. For me, the fire of poetry emerges from a well-strung arrangement of words, words that are orchestrated, words that are stolen, words that are sharp. I have occasionally been accused of being a romantic (in the sense that I am obsessed with extravagantly archaic doctrines of poetry), and in truth, poetry for me very much hinges on elements which I do not necessarily understand and which I cannot define rationally. (Here I mean dreams, ghosts, collective thought, and language as a somewhat animate creature.) I do not say this out of some sense of righteousness. I would rather have it that poetry was a curiosity than a religion—a game as opposed to a quest. I do not in my work intend to arrive at a goal or to extend a specific bias of content in a political way. For the most part it seems appropriate for me to write poetry, and sometimes it seems necessary.

In terms of a personal doctrine, I am eager to say that poetry first and foremost is rooted in song, in an attention to tradition, and in exploration of form to the extent that form presents a visual map of sound. What I react against the most in poetry is narrative which exists without an activeness or resonance of language. I think that poetry at its best creates a space in which both the writer and reader are moved to a new place. If nothing else, I can find comfort in the fact that I am changed by a poem—maybe I'm cooler, maybe I've entered a fiction or some new universe or some place that seems safe. As the poet Sterling Brown saw it, the poem is the mechanism by which the poet escapes the various dives of the physical world. That idea of motion is part of the unorthodox science of poetry—the

physics of it.

In terms of prosody, nothing is more exciting to me than the idea that there are internal mechanics at play, specifically in Pound's explanation of the tone leading of vowels. I take the metrical center or measure of a poem to be reflective of and influenced by a collection of sounds apparent in the world—a mesh of day-to-day intonations.

Given an assemblage of such elements one might arrive at a poem. It is always arguable that there is more at stake in a poetics in its relation to a larger social order. In the end what draws me to poetry is not its apparent usefulness or uselessness in the world, but that poetry is made in an unpredictable investigative space of language.

JULIE KALENDEK

USING POETRY

One of many simultaneous locations, this is the horizon's dissolve, apparent, sensible, or celestial. An inhabited line where vanishing points lack the capacity to accomodate or predict true configuration. Therefore what you speak is used in radiating, orbiting motion. Therefore as if by fire objects are with thought consumed. Therefore time is encompassed (as in noon or midnight), and all things mercantile are circumscribed, to be of the frozen and serviceable collection. And in the end when even the maps are repossessed, our invisible occupancies will remain entirely unchanged, previous to the hereafter, existing in intersections, and devout among the estate of words.

SEAN KILLIAN

TRANSIT OF ONE POETICS

Poetry is, to me, an apparition. An apparition of morphologies, of shapes that take our places with word (both visual and musical).

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A net of realities is only an extremely taut language, or sometimes the reverse, a loose talk that scoops our promises out of our mouths.

Relationship is, to me, the interpenetration of risk and promise. All relationships, fraught with their own turning, which happens precisely as a trope, figuratively, and as a trope, livingly.

Promise is the story of a morphological shape in the future, only outheld, still withheld. We can only reach it by seeing it, or sometimes by saying it in new alarming or calm circumstances.

I hold promise to be an apparition. A showing of shapes that, though tethered terrestrially, are intermixed with a kind of platonic ideal (clearly impossible to define except as a shape thrown forward to meet the descending needs of all derivatives).

Relationship is a derivation, a rivalling, a rivalling of shapes, forms, and the thoughts that also show shape and form if necessarily put, strongly appearing, placing us in a surrounding rivalry of astounding complexity (plankton in network don't tell half the story)

I shape my netting not of you which is impossible but of an other said to be sent both as a promise and a threat. This, too, is poetry, to figure out which threat is really promising, and which promise threatening, terrifying. I appear to take my shape but am the derivative placement with a word for face, body and you.

Risk is the possible changing of any shape, that of relationship, that of language, and, in poetry, it seems there's such a risk of interpretation that it almost appears *dangerous*, certainly *demanding* and liable to cause a kind of suffering among words, us trying to figure out what it means or rather why the reverberation is on so high that truth is the spillage of the sound across the basic instrumentality (instrumental objects). When meaning reverberates with an incessance, we may be in the sharp verb of truth, watching shape and form change, watching word act human.

We are taut in these relationships because they do matter; there's only some hands to go around, and then those, too, increase. We favor the risk-taking against the quiet stones of well-kept privacies. Though those, too, can have valuable markings.

We'll find the suffering that true relationship enters, broaches, breaches. To suffer to find accomodating shape (yet risky), to suffer to find other, odder shape (risk filling promise as if promise were merely a balloon skin).

Time's apparition moves us into the poetry of shape, risk and promise. There is only this always mutual shaping, and between the dead and the living, it seems to me, especially.

Epitaphs will be our appearances one day. But words have got to recreate their scary, slippery quality, the utter complexity of any given feature of a word, its lack of quietus, its forwarding.

If the signifiers are loosened into a gust of indirections, we can be glad we're bound to promises that store, sometimes, certain shapes of ours, seeings of time, vows, crossings. In the unmasterable haze of signification, there is always a light of question, the brightest light of all. Quest inheres in even the stooping forward, the inching forth, the gasp that seems made of pure oxygen. I announce what is the peculiar sign temporarily associated with a variety of nets and vacancies. We find our way toward the remarkable blizzard of postmodernity where it may prove that we no longer exist, are in fact torrents of question, only, torments lacking answer (no matter how prepossessed we appear, or possessive). Warning: the sign flies off the handle to occupy the broken pumpground where the vandals gather and the thieves plot.

I'd ask questions if I were you; then a meteor took his teeth out. We said I promised you, I believe in your lack of directions because that's the only way until you can afford progress of another sort. His smile had become unmanageable, because there were no teeth left, only a curving, hilarious gap.

Shapes flew in here, the opposite of Pandora's cube; someone was going to shut his trap. Then no more deceit. No more government lies. No more couples' deceptions, dreamers' objections.

Sign is lost till you carry it to yourself. Which requires a questioning strength, not just an affirmative but a wandering toward the sign before it locates you and asks you toward it. Then you'll carry the lost sign away, and it will almost look like a wounded deer. Time gives us arrows to place in our flesh. We don't need deer? My promises don't bind you, they bind me; I have to be bound to bear promise which, remember, is the shape to come at some future time when we find ourselves in it, part of it, living out its vast and intimate morphology, where every terrain is gathered into a quest, where every time is asked for a region of origin, where every sign is carried, not inside, but on the outside where you see yourself in a mirror with it.

The sign is now indivisible with a promise, meaning it's a variant of its own shaping in clearly changing event of both its

being said and its being recognized. We're only transfigured by such a relevant entry into the meteor-shower of promises, risks, relationships. Baptism by fire. By fire is the sign seen in your hand, in the way you write, in the way you carry away a shape that rivets of its own accord and contour. By way of intense study, endless practice on one's own interpenetration of promise, risk, meaning, verb. The self is at least a practical sign by which we design certain things. The ideal tumbles into a torrid craft and is displaced in the very succession by which it makes manifest is own idea-making, its own power. But we can't hold it except as a forwardness into the time we live, or we fail, though, probably, we fail "it" anyway, and are transported into the sudden and strange morphology of failure. Well, what say you to a drink? Lethe looks sparkling today but ichor's run-out; coffee might live too long into the night. I'll take a sip of ambrosial wine, watchword for some exchange, some interpenetration. We net ourselves to catch ourselves at what we do best, promising again and again, risking again and again, appearing again and again.

A note on the title:
Transit of One Poetics

One is seen in a unitary way within itself, not as the one poetics but as one of many poetics, unit-like only in that it may involve itself in some complexity that reflects oneself, in this case, myself. But *my* poetics is perhaps too strong a claim; I think a poetics might claim one, and I'll leave it at that. Poetics, a one, or each one a possible one, remains one thing, one stance, one comprehension of ours. The one is, again, unitive in that its binding consideration of itself plays up many points and angles which may reflect back into an ever-shifting unit (better than centrality). *One* is neither at the center nor exiled to a margin, if that number counts, and I, for one, believe it does, that the disparate individual can draw together into an approximation (an apparition?) of one, of oneself. And during a transit of a life, a language: one, once again, gets that fragile, momentary unity by which one can go forward, facing the transitory.

ROBERT KOCIK

(*POETRY AS THE PRACTICE OF SOMETHING ELSE*)

Composition Afield

Poetry as a matter of mediating worlds. Immediating. Not as a pole in itself, but the force which moves through. The moment poetry becomes a thing in itself, a specialty, it is objectified, isolate—is more its own experience. The experience of itself, joining the self-interested, less generous side of existence.

Rattling the letters around, where poetry counts.

To be far from where poetry counts.

Hurting the chances for the poem by giving it all the time in the world—what is considered the doing of that which is needed in order to carry the poem over into being—actually separating the poem from its weal.

Poetry made of its alleged detriments. Practices which remove one from the chance to write.

Poetry afield immaterializes itself to move far from its own concerns into the adjunct. Lightly equiped. All the weight on agility. Undermanned. Materializing as instantly. Nonabomination.

(Whitman: the poet creates not only the poem but the orbit in which it is to spin.)

My observation is that a poet's lack of mobility in the culture is corroborated by poets' actions and expectations. This observation also holds poets responsible for their overall lack of pertinence. (Almost no one is about to reconstrue her or him self as beholden to poetry.) It falls on poets not to resign themselves within the given confines—e.g., to be printed, prized, proffered. Afield alludes to the fact that the role of the poet is not a given. And that the way in which the poet deals with this question of role is largely responsible for what a given poetry and readership will be.

If the place of poetry has been taken away, if the culture does not have poetry as propriety, with the responsibility falling on the side of the poets, the attention is not on how to receive (pacifying the characterization of the poet, objectifying the poet with outside determinations which do not necessarily issue from the poet) but on what is being given. Afield proposes poetry as

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perpetually generous. Illogically so.

In charge of its own economy.

Begs the poet to evaluate what manner of contribution this is...

Logically poetry funded to the extent it is itself fund.

Poetry as the poor part. Of materials which remained after a making—which could be afforded. That which is known without resources. Though this paragraph, personal.

Action as the experience which the poetry is asking in order to pursue itself. So, afterall, all for the poem? I'd say no, no propriety. Experience as innocent of the poem. Ignorant thereof. Not objectifying the world as provision.

Or, breadth. Divergent. Working in ways which permit the poet to be at work in the culture. The part of the poet which is the writing of poetry perhaps proceeding more gradually owing to a lateral mobility, parts actually played—the pull on the poet, self-imposed, allowing for a corresponding call or emplacement from without. Going gradually not for its own sake but because the pull on the poet dispenses so the occasion. Relaxes obligation. More poetry, less paper.

The poet can go afield either covertly or overtly. Covertly the poet subsumes herself in another practice, owing to need or as a matter of principle. Undercover. While the fact that one is double is not brought into play, the two commitments bear entirely on each other. Concomitants. Accomplice. The effaced poet who calls no special attention to the fact that she is given to poetry. What the poem is is also completely subsumed and manifest in a course other than itself. Unvested interest.

Overtly, the special background of the poet is understood as qualification for other positions. As asset and announced as such, and though one may only be deluding oneself. Though not taking the other post in order come up with one's poetry. As in artistic collaboration—there to do one's proper work. Not the creation of inadvertences wherein mind-off is actually mind-on poetry. No one thing for the sake of another. No subservience. But called on as resource in matters other than the poem.

Writing as the conscience of its accomplice.

Assetism. The vantage point a life in the language of...the viability of the poet's bearing in other circumstances—the language, not as alive in itself but enormous inanimate awaiting—what it takes to...co-issue.

Literally, this would mean that the poet practices something else. But this is not meant literally. I'm simply aligning the experience of the poem with the experience of the poet in as arduous a sense as possible, while pointing out that there are very few surprises between the two.

A poem not about something else. Not a matter of content. It can be about itself, for that matter. Though through the living of some other. Many lives.

Afield, or a reapprehension of what work is. No undesirable commercial time financing highly desirable creative time—E.g., objectified time, subjectified time. (Grammatically would be what?)

All time as expansive, indulgent.

General practitioners. Artisans of communication.

Tremendous respect for how little a poem does.

Present publication practices: the sensation of a rich flow of reserves doubling back on itself. Publication as part of the problem—rooting writing in its impasse. In relation to present claims—to figure out where it's spilling over “and who's lapping it up?”

Were a poet to be called on, or, called in, indeed—what would it mean? To be translated into the culture would mean not merely a reading of one's words, but one's being called into play. To give to the poet the particular role implied in the tenor of her writings. Earned reciprocity? Neither just spreading around the words nor a reinforcing of the circuitry along which readings and writing tend to run—but a re-routing of address. Redress. Uprooting of the poetry from its given place.

Reciprocally, no propagation of content without following it out. No putting the poem in question without putting the place of the poem equally in question.

The poems themselves free to be read or not in the wake of the lives which offer them.

The artist not free to ridicule preponderance of work ethic outside of his creative exhaustion. If art puts the questions of livelihood to itself and then comes up disoriented, compromised and dependent, it has played into its own disintegration in the culture at large. Fallen short of envisioning its belonging. Has dislodged itself by providing but for itself. As politicians had been, out of touch.

What kind of world would this be?

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Porous.

Publish would mean to seek to fully orient the writer's way of working in the world. To make known one's bearing among others.

Livelihood as face of muse.

Burden shifting. Unqualified. Opportune.

Poetry finds itself outside its element. No more a point or pole.

KIMBERLY LYONS

It seems to me that internal reserves of synaesthetic memory, impulses toward relationship, the fires of suffering, hallucination, and playfulness are crucial to the work. Poems come through the body. Writing is a physical event and a wired telepathy between extrinsic and intrapsychic agents. This may be a sort of 19th century spiritualist's view but it's closest to my actual experience. Robert Motherwell wrote "shaping and arranging...obliterates the need and often the awareness of representation. Without reference to likeness, it possesses feeling because all decisions in regard to it are ultimately made on the grounds of feeling," and H.D. wrote "We are inclined to visualize these broken sentences and unfinished rhythms as...layers of rock..." From these two conceptions of poetics, an inclination to intuitive abstraction and wish to make feeling states concrete, I look for room to maneuver.

Procedures, games, exercises, formulas, foils, meditations, and prayers to the muse stimulate and organize unfamiliar, inspired modes of thinking and feeling. New York City with its febrile, disintegrating textures is a hell on earth and poet's paradise of fascinating simultaneities.

I've come to a way of writing poetry that I've learned from sifting through flea markets and thrift stores, from going through the precious debris of my city. From finding gorgeous, strange dresses from the 1940s on top of garbage cans. Hunting through the soiled, beautiful, accretion of vocabulary. Artifact and ecology. A way to endure the losses.

BEN MARCUS

AN OPEN AREA FREE OF BEASTS

A Brief Discussion of Aesthetics as it Relates to Evolution and Techniques of the Divine Animal Shape-Stealer

The Argument:

A writing will thrive that puts itself at risk. The animal alone has risked everything in terms of its secret relations with God. Therefore it is to be emulated in our texts.

Specimens:

1. The holy dog, kneeling.
2. Sacrificial patterns of the bird witness¹.
3. Zoo-spirals (format for the animal exit).
4. Evolutionary pantomimes (theater of disappearance) wherein biological advancement is faked by the true animal disciple as it strives toward invisibility².

Practice:

There is no longer any language to describe the movements of animals. When they disappeared, evolving into the perfect ether that their mouths carved with vocal gestures towards the Divine, the language to describe them vanished as well, proving that the object's terms evolve along with the object, and are consequently no less elusive. But if writing can no longer render the animal in prayer, it can still depict, however feebly, postures of this attentiveness to God, the posture or body cadence being essentially a fixed position (evolutionary stage) struck by the animal as it delivers its message into the sky. Writing that denies this blessed straining does not sufficiently satisfy the requirements of the Holy, and therefore is technically not poetic according to the Handbook of Animal Symbols and Divine Utterances. Certainly a writing must make something. The dead must be rebuilt by the work of the living, the wind must trade places with the dust, the weather must feed on our nightly prayer and give us back our messages and desires in the form of sunsprays and cyclones. But should we look for this poetry within religious and zoological structures? Should anthologies such as this one offer safe consolation that anything private and

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obscure is poetic, that we are all o.k. as long as we devise a syntax in discord with our private prayer, uncommon and never before found in the body of an animal? What actually is to be done but witness that all texts invariably map the ascension of an animal as it is prayed³ into the sky? The reader is the last witness of animal prayer, and therefore the last poet. That the reader does this strictly by viewing a text (bait-vision), through a variety of squints and affected blindness should not diminish the intensity of witness possible: one remakes all things with the eyes, translating the prayer blocks before the secretly stationed God is allowed to receive them, keeping all idolaters and cowards at bay by a vigilant scanning known only to those who first made the animals with words and will later unmake them, when the so-called afterlife is achieved and language is traded in for postures and emotions. It is this final witness that alone can be the true generator of what was once called art. Only that which will make its travel through weather unscathed deserves our attention, something that will not shame us when we again convene with God in an open area free of beasts.

¹ Weather maps depict birdstorms upon areas where God is seeded heavily.
The birds disappear into the weather and are said to be *sacrificed*.

² The first theater was comprised of animals that staged outdoor disappearances. It is believed that they acted invisible by camouflaging themselves against the weather.

³ Animals realize that language is the least suitable form for prayer, disappearing as it does within the elements, often dissipating before it reaches God. Their most successful prayer is achieved when an actual co-animal is dispatched skyward with the message engraved upon its husk. God can receive the prayer by spooling weather over the rising body of the animal, thus coming to know the wishes of the disciple.

MARK MCMORRIS

SPEAKING THE POEM

disorder or music

—Robert Duncan

A state, akin to an awareness of health, arises from the circumstantial and psychic demands on an individual going about the ordinary business of living. Questions are asked and answered: the myriad conditions of the Self perpetually undergo analysis, reformation, analysis, and meanwhile the daily stresses mount: I wonder, wander into a sense of defeat, exhilaration, death, lethargy, shame, and wishful thinking. The mechanism of what sometimes follows such an especially confused and trenchant surfeit of life is obscure to me. Some sort of change does occur, a refusal of primacy to circumstantial dilemmas, a mental truce, a species of liberation. In that critical space an emotion reasserts itself. The contingent occupations of mind now reapper as aspects of a total being newly intent in its life.

Poetry may come to pass in that state under other narrowly-defined conditions to stand as an analogy for the emotion, but one so intimately derived from the emotion as to be its mirror image, taking on its duration, phases of recurrence and dimunition, tempo, tones, and intricacies, and possessing an illusory life of its own kind. The rhythm of poetry has to be viewed as the inner form of this vitality, for the origin desires language of an especial atunement, concretion, and lucidity to come fully into the outer life (light). So long as two words assemble in this situation of *hearing right to the bottom of things*, a rhythm is either intimated or suppressed, and it is to sustain the vitality that ART intervenes and attempts to abet the harmonies partially given at the outset.

The formations made in air by the mouth hit upon the fibers of the ear and stimulate them, thence journeying to the brain and communicating with the muscles in the language of muscles, that is to say, of music. Meanwhile the brain continues to process the poem as information, and most probably will frustrate itself if the language has been arranged according to skill and Zukofsky's apt comment: "an order of words which as movement and tone (rhythm and pitch) approaches...the

wordless art of music as a kind of mathematical limit." Any piece of language will have affinities and vectors that reach from themselves into a wider field of words (R. Waldrop). Certain word combinations will further the development of an idea, picture, or story; certain combinations will perpetuate the underlying current of feeling already in progress. Poetry decisively favors the latter. The words of a poem taken in syntactical order may even oppose intelligibility of thought. There seems to be no need for thought in the ordinary sense; the acute and affecting rhythm proceeds without break and gives to the poem its principal form of coherence. The poem behaves like a piece of music.

But in practice, naturally, the upper limit of music cannot be reached. The listening that occurs is a listening to words with all the subtle tissue that words possess. The meanings which persist stimulate the mind and open it to a cascade of resulting images, comment, and sensation: not a deciphering of the poem but rather a corresponding movement of word and feeling with its own personal cast to it. As I understand poetry, this exchange between poem and audience comes about through speech. One person speaks to another, with due respect, with no desire to persuade. There is no conflict with Zukofsky's unattainable upper limit. Poetic speech has an integral musicality apart from any deliberate inflection of the speaking voice.

Under the necessity that a poem come from the lips of a person—strangely enough, from “a persons under emotion speaking out his thought” (Yeats)—I attempt to arrange the language by art. A poem takes what it needs from diverse areas of experience and crosses borders normally sealed in other rhetorical genres. It is concerned with the whole being, and the impetus ranges over distinct times, vocabularies, memories, rooms and streets to integrate and preserve, and to fashion out of where a writer has been a terrain of lived experience that can now be visited.

To sort out the forces that cooperate to bring this land into the realm of things makes distinct what occurs together by nature. That said, it is useful for me to think separately of an emotional state, an impetus, and a current of feeling in order to say what I expect a poem to do. The emotion is mute, a fresh awareness or convalescence—a return to health—after the ailments of dealing with life. It animates the being. The impetus

draws on this and conceives a desire to speak, to say something true. And in the arrangement of language, the articulations themselves engender a current of feeling that passes back into the emotion and offers fresh possibilities for saying.

To take the impetus: one is inclined to think of it as a desire that language transcend its ordinary uses, its ordinary modes of analysis, explanation, and communication, and open a passage into some sort of beyond. This is a fair guess and makes no assumptions about the existence of an impalpable world outside of this one. Poetry takes the mind—allows the mind to go—along paths that are invisible in the normal course of things. These paths lie through sensation, the sensuous words of a poem, its material sounds, its movement, and its patterns of meaning. But in the immediacy of the poem, in its particularity, one is at each moment on the verge of revelation. Each word reveals more. What does it reveal? It reveals itself, as if materialized afresh, and thereby reveals more of its path. The *next* in a poem must always await its arrival. The ground and the object in it come into being simultaneously, and each fresh object means a fresh earth.

To be more precise about my sense of poetry as revelatory language I think would lead to a nomenclature of mysticism. The experience of hearing a poem, though, makes most sense to me as a kind of liberation from a false state of affairs. I come into life, cast anew, not subject to circumstances invented for the regulation of my vitality. I become convinced of a depth to things. I swear that a membrane formed from vital energy and transformed into the language of the poem exists. Thus, through the poem, this membrane is disclosed. That is the place where my life lives.

PAM REHM

Make the word “reaction” from the letters in the word
“creation.”

This is how the poem should move, as in “to do” again and again.

The poem is not predestined.

The movement is one of approach and the letting go.

50 Spirit and Practice

In his essay on Cavalcanti, Pound writes “There is a residue of perception,

perception of something which requires a human being to produce it.” And in

a poem Laura Riding writes, “And ears report echoes first/ Then sounds, distinguish words/ Of which the sense comes last—”

To move. And a movement which is constantly devouring the space between

the unforeseen and the encountered.

Poems mend our hearing as much as contend with it.

Find the word listen in the word silent.

Find the word silent in the word listen.

The poem is the responsibility of my seeking, which is the opposite of keeping,

what convenes between what is found within the words that are put down.

The poem does not demand reason, it commands it.

Therefore, knowledge is an end the poem should never claim to obtain.

Instead, a poem must proclaim and thus reveal the sounds which speech can never

make. Speech leaves us gasping for breath. Speech is the tongue in savage gestures.

So that when speaking, we are actually running slowly away from each other.

Turn time around and make the word emit.

This is what the poem must do: send out, give forth as an exchange.

The poem is an exchanging of the heart and mind a little at a time.

A poem takes patience. Patience as a virtue. The virtue of any creation.

Patience is attendance in a reciprocal fashion.

This is how our being comes into communion with something else.

What is risked to the abandonment of selfishness, that is the poem.

What the poem gives, then is to the sustenance of the sway of language away

from the time frame which it is placed within that is

passionless.

First an “echo” and then a “sound” out of our confoundedness.

Poems are relationships between ourselves and words that depend upon our attendance, our attention to them.

To only explain our failures is a forestalling.

I want to write within a gratitude to the relations I embrace.

Thus, the poem doesn’t happen by me but because of what is called belief.

Not just belief as in waiting or in expectation, but as one “keeping at work”

as in “doing” by inspection as well as by intuition.

For it is not only through an understanding of what is perceived but also

by what is sacrificed to perception that the poem arises.

Because it is for love, the poem will endure.

It will endure the isolation it is caused, in order to be written, instead of falling to the ground without a thought for what has gone.

If who we are is what we write, it should not be our own name for

that comes before us and goes without saying. But if throughout our lives we

embrace certain words, continually then what we are embracing is a way away from

what the “I” means, circumstantially, to what the “I” means in respect to the poem.

Find the word “mean” and the word “amen” in the word “name.”

By name I mean amen.

I write to get to some by-place. I write poetry to get by the placing of myself

at the beginning of each day within a time frame that only antagonizes itself.

I read poetry in order to listen to the silent reaction of creation.

ELIZABETH ROBINSON

My fundamental approach to life (and therefore to poetry) is sacramental. By this I mean that I see the sacred as permeating, pervading all life. By extension, then, I find the miraculous in the most mundane things. That, to me, is poetry enough. That is a basis by which I have always been able to establish connection, relation: incarnation.

My intent is to locate the phenomenal as it resides in everyday experience and this is a search for incarnation, embodiment. I start, as I must, with my own essential experience of the world. If, with Merleau-Ponty, we can agree upon the “primacy of perception” perhaps we can, as he says, “grasp time through [the] present and by being present...[and] perceive others through [our] individual li[ves], in the tension of an experience which transcends itself.” With Merleau-Ponty, I want to say that “it is *true* at the moment of this promise, that our love extends beyond *qualities*, beyond the body, beyond time, even though we could not love without qualities, bodies, time.”

Language has the potential to tap that embodiment, that primacy borne in perception and then to *move* somehow “out there” (beyond me, at least) in a connective leap that I would like to call, however provisionally or inconsistently it transpires, a sacred movement.

Then being able to connect with language is having the experience of a more full incarnation, a respite of sorts from the dualisms and fragmentation that diminish me, humans. If this is an experience of transcendence it is so because there I can merge my sense of freedom with a corresponding sense of relation: to the range of words, to the reader, to a community, to meaning which is embodied in process.

Making poems permits me to make connections that aren’t possible elsewhere. Therefore, incarnation is a process of creating ties, of joining parts or even recognizing a communion that isn’t usually recognizable.

In Duncan’s words, “we have a job...to insist that the POEM is the passion...and to arrive at a great poem we have to...insist upon the incarnation in language. This means—as St. Anselm argues—faith precedes understanding.” So much in language, as in all domains of experience, is tenuous. But like the one who

cried out to Jesus, I want to couple two impossible utterances to say, "I do believe; help me with my unbelief."

ROBERTO TEJADA

ACCIDENT BODY—RECKLESS SELF

1.

Is there some difference between this honey and rain
water, the volcano a sleeping woman?

Is it north to the meadow and can the river
be crossed before sundown?

Is there food enough to get us there,
some turnips and dried meat?

Are there animals do us harm in the forest?
Can I bring my pistol and slingshot?

Should I put the kettle on before telling the story?
Did we pray before supper and these Thy gifts?

The meaning of the shattered glass and open book?

Why is it winter now over the desert, the cactus field blooming?

Why is the soup cold? My hand still sweating?

Were there stars across in April?
Was it last Tuesday?

Are there voices in the stairwell?

Work to be done on the table and chairs?

The water you can hear me thinking?

Too late to change my mind?

2.

In the beginning, when the will of the king was rendered and he began to scribble signs across the celestial vault, from the most recondite place surfaced a flame, a dark flame, the Infinite, like a vapor forming in what was still unformed, enclosed within the ring of the sphere, neither white nor black, nor green, nor red, of no color at all. It was only after the flame had assumed its form that it flared the resilient colors and from the innermost recess of the flame emerged a will from which the colors rose to cover everything below.

54 Spirit and Practice

3.

Keep the eel alive until ready to skin.
Kill it with a sharp blow to the head.
Slip the noose around the eel's head and hang the other end of the cord on a hook, high on the wall.
Cut the eel about 3 inches below the head all around, so as not to penetrate the gall bladder, which lies close to the head.
Peel the skin back, pulling down hard—if necessary with a pair of pliers—until the whole skin comes off like a glove.
Clean the fish by slitting the white belly and removing the gut, which lies close to the thin belly skin.

4.

"Insofar as he is spirit, it is a man's misfortune to have the body of an animal and thus to be like a thing, but it is the glory of the human body to be the substratum of a spirit. And the spirit is so closely linked to the body as a thing that the body never ceases to be haunted, is never a thing except virtually, so much so that if death reduces it to the condition of thing, the spirit is more present than ever...In a sense the corpse is the most complete affirmation of the spirit." [Bataille]

5.

This is what the *clearing* looks like: the plush green *weave* in which the *names of things* had ceased to matter. Yes, there is a *willow* there but several *birch trees*, silver as well. There is a *cloud* obstructing the *sun* so that the resulting *shadow* over the *field* just beyond, is variably stained with *nothing* less than *darkness*. Here is where his slender *body* happens, his enormous *hands* out to here around me, a *rhythm* to fill the heretofore unsounded *spaces* of a *daybreak* taut with *light*.

6.

Clarity before the bloodshed and the darkness thereafter: my drink my hand my letter, simply this bliss what if the skin by the ear the light on after, the weather? To stave off the figure of death and its abandon by becoming your body in space and time

with my tongue and all eyes everywhere beyond or over and over the hard shape of my want. About glide and endless motion the smooth hand across the blank page of your evening skin: about the rain, a language of first names when the money ended: about places where the dust had gathered around the broken objects and the shelves by which they were divided: sustain the wind is blowing hence the clothes hung out to dry a line in the meadow: about this vehicle of the extramural, higher transfiguration of these increasingly more fugitive intimacies.

7.

TODAY I SHARPENED MY KNIFE. I PICKED 9 PEARS AND WAS BITTEN BY A SCORPION. I PLAYED THE MARACAS, BAKED BREAD, DREAMT OF AN ISLAND IN THE MIDDLE OF A LAKE. I AWOKE. I SMOKED A PIPE. I SLAUGHTERED A PHEASANT. I SPILLED MY ONLY GLASS OF WINE. I SLEPT. THIS TIME I DREAMT THE 4 PLANETS LOVED ME IN THEIR ORBIT. THEN I DISAPPEARED INTO THE DARK.

8.

But also the whole earth in space and time. A record of the rocks, the first living things and life and climate. Age of reptile, mammal and the dawn of the species. The seeds of civilization, early empires, of gods and goddesses and stars, of priest and priestess, queen and king and writing itself. Serf and slave and lord. That garden. This book. The ancients as such. Of princes, parliaments and powers. Of city and State. The orbit around the Sun. Of trade by sea, the Orient, this Newfoundland. All uprising and independence. Factory, machine and earthly paradise. Millenial forebear, animal, interior enemy. War of wars, let us pray: my voice *** above the endless racket.

TRANSLATION: WORD AND WORLD

MARY ANGELINE

NOTES FROM SILVER LAKE

I move from letter to word sometimes phrase onto the next opening that I might: find my way, breathing space, something must needs be told of love or what buried magic in the sparkle of “who is speaking”...my own business at hand, what comes to hand, is the place of my own poetic opportunity...in that way the poem comes more by singing the great stones into their places, implying a fearless following of clues, regardless, of life/prayer into the future for consideration...in the telling it is obvious and impossible not to engage the political, gender, everyday make believe individual person of this community, having access to the words however removed from their matrix I can experience them almost exclusively...this binding effect wants momentum therefore it becomes “practical” or a direct effect of this practice to increase the physical separation, *i.e.*, to de-emphasize the “love-affair” by abandoning structures while also reinforcing “tone” with a sort of sententious “message” to the living...that is the sort of thing I tell myself when I come to notice these rocks strapped to my back...occasional delight in the sense that I have gone too far, that I have exalted or been enraptured or made gestures in turning to that turning and must invent a ground to level it somehow so that any subsequent exchange “along those lines” does not get “out of line,” *i.e.*, enshrined as some object of attention...So how can time be circumvented? Well, I’m not really interested in circumventing the literal, I’ve always loved for love (*For Love*, also) and hope it can withstand such dissection as describing its surroundings, *e.g.*, how it’s important to split open the head and jam in the lighted mass or the surprise amulet of the never letting it suggest a specific is how I have come to understand those lines...so in that way what fool wants to be conquered in their own poems; better, for me anyway, to carry on the response in the poem, *i.e.*, to feed into the meaning process we are all engaged in. Elimination of pretense is the primary mover and the primary illusion, an agenda which is multiple and incommeasurable which I lose track of when making my marks; this accounts for much of what I deem aesthetic and imperative in the work time—that I can “have the answers,” be lulled away from the program of self and make tantalizing restatements for my magical parody master my master of letters wants to get over all that driving force of universal consumption for getting it right; instead, possibilities all

beautifully wrong and in trouble yet brilliantly intact for the length of the session we're together, this is what I would call my poems. The relationship past to present of experience of perception gives loss the attribute of conflict, a conflict in the capacity to "experience" the interplay, for some unknown reason, rears its head in the work. It is curious to me that the work wants to make a relationship to all (?) the sites of my looking in the present...I don't know right off or sometimes clearly I do and then that is another "problem," what it is I'll be revealing or what dominant tradition of "thought" I have wandered into forcing me to do my rope trick. I will, though, proceed from letter or constellation of sound or "meaning phrase" with what gets overthrown from within the already begun poem, begin to add something of "my own" to open it up that I might as an articulation of the "truth"

link my side of the story with you over there given everything under non-equilibrium conditions.

SHERRY BRENNAN

OTHERWHERE THAN PRACTICE OR THEORY

Under the rubric of praxis the traditional understanding of both gender and writing comes together. Within the Platonic system, as Derrida has made clear, writing as praxis is subordinated to *theoria*; the feminine as body, as praxis, is subordinated to the masculine as head, *theoria*. The privilege accorded *theoria* allows it to appropriate both writing and the feminine for its ends—it subjects praxis, and itself remains standing.

According to this logic, praxis is no simple retreat for the (woman) poet (although it seems to me that many feminists assume it can be). If she is appropriating praxis to her ends, she is making a masculinist move; if she is hiding within praxis, she is leaving herself open, doubly subject. At the same time, obviously, theoria is no retreat, either. Logos has been so strongly characterized as masculine from the very start of the patriarchal tradition that any simple appeal to theory poses the danger that the (woman) poet will simply reinforce the status quo.

One might, however, attempt to pose briefly the possibility of a liaison between writing and that which is marked as gendered. Here, there is the possibility to deproprietate, de-pense, despecularize, defamiliarize. "She will bring about a mutation in

human relations, in thought, in all praxis" (Cixous).

For example, there is the (no) salmon, which I have attempted to write about elsewhere. On the Columbia River, salmon have begun to show the effects of hydroelectric "development"; they are dying out. This ecological disaster poses a peculiar problem to poetics. Within traditional poetics, the poet MUST—poetics *necessitates* it—appropriate the salmon to his own understanding, to his logos, his theoria, his experience, his self, in order to write *about* it.

There is, however, a chance this salmon poses to poetics: the possibility that the writer might approach the salmon otherwise, other than in order to "speak for" it, other than in order to constitute it within the logic and order of western thought (even the most "humane"), other than to appropriate, familiarize—or even *defamiliarize*—it. This is the possibility for writing the (no) salmon. A space in which the writer passes for a hinge—a liaison—between the writing and the salmon. And in this space, there are feminine remains—defamiliarized.

At this otherwhere, where one attempts to write other than for or about the salmon, where one attempts neither a theory of nor a practice for (saving) the salmon, writing itself is affected. Writing does not look like a traditional argument or the narrativized experience of a traditional subject. As such a writing opens up, that which is traditionally marked for appropriation (the salmon, the feminine) can be remarked in such a way as to indicate the other than appropriative moves possible, what remains for us to make possible.

LAYNIE BROWNE

THE DIVISION WHEREAS, TO GO FIND A CLOCK:

Fragmentation, Equation, and Acceleration In Contemporary Poetics

Resemblances to the present moment can be read from the surroundings, and in this way, writing mirrors the many conditions in which we live. A lack of spaciousness has overcome us to the extent that we don't like to leave our compact desires. While things seem large and unwieldy, things also seem highly possible, plausible without cause or circumstance. The met recognition of ruins and flourishing.

62 Word and World

The drawing of days into calendars does not preclude the possibility that Tuesday does not end at the edge of one box. Division seems arbitrary but attention and time segments do pose limitations. One example is the size of a page in composition. If a long narrow page produces a long narrow poem there is less choice in other aspects. A sense of overexposure often leads to knowing little about much, in effect sampling, or framing. Poems in sections, words divided, images minimalized. Negative space becomes an active part of the visual construction of poetry.

Fragmentation can lead to condensation, a core can lead to reduction. Formulas are interspersed with theory. Equation becomes a form. With so much dependent on the economic state, the boundaries between practical and expressive dissolve. We are not as we are often by choice. The need to do many things at once adds chaos and overlapping. Repetition and reservation. Appropriation. What has become internal being so hidden. Closed ambition. Or a sense of internal fragmentation projected back out into community. Or the sound of all this as music.

So many things wish to leave me. I also wish that they no longer belonged to me, but it seems so personal to let them go, as if to say I will forget you, and yet, this is what creates possession. To hear each voice as part of a collective is helpful since opposition also implies relation. This does not undermine the individual, since there could be no larger body without each separate response.

Difficulty is present and effort is the opposite of this difficulty since the effort disposes of the separation of thought which allows one to think of the difficulty. On a hot day becoming a part of the heat allows one to forget it as something external which must be absorbed. The ability to block this separation between the outside and internal allows participation in many things unlimited, and erases the boundaries of the mind, which is where the boundaries arise and divide, casting aside possibilities.

Interiors have been pushed away until there is no shell and only a shell, since the outside is not mere invention. Since the inside has been removed from its comfortable horizon.

Contracted circumstance, and the rate of things advancing, or the actual speed of living is also influence. Before the experience begins, it might have been calculated, recorded, decided. The physical body needs time to process the transactions of living. The thought body follows. Especially in large cities, there is

a momentum which keeps one moving so as not to fall. And to avoid falling, we continue to move. Acceleration can aid a falling body.

The solution itself must be implied by the question. How to continue creating and existing in an environment where priorities seem predetermined. Where marginality has been suggested. There is the sense of the messenger, the ability to glide, notwithstanding the cold.

My intention is a sense of spaciousness despite the surroundings. An evaluation of the perception of time which diminishes, creating a non-negotiable world. It is not that there are not connections, but that they are not known.

JOHN BYRUM

NOTES TOWARD A POETICS: A FIELD THEORY OF LANGUAGE

We are (surrounded by) emptiness,
[the floating world,] but it is an
emptiness filled with signs.

—Henri Lefebvre

1. world is as language is as mind is as
mind is as world is as language is as
language is as mind is as world is as
2. Imagine world, language, and mind as three interwoven and partially isomorphic fields. Areas of each can be mapped onto areas of each of the other two. Thus, portions of each field can be understood as a function of portions of the other two.
3. Imagine each field as a network of nodal points/areas.

For example, in the language field, each language element (word, phrase, sentence, etc.) points toward (carries, embodies) a set of ‘meanings,’ or denotations, whose trails or spheres of connotations and associations radiate outward from the central area of meaning, rippling through and inflecting other nodes throughout the network.

64 Word and World

Analogous pictures can be employed to describe the fields of mind and world.

4. Like the series of all possible numbers in mathematics, the fields of world, language, and mind may be figured as at all levels dense/compact/continuous or vacuous/open/granular; which is to say they seem at once all that is the case, and networks among an unknown undecidable.
5. “If only you do not try to utter what is unutterable, then nothing gets lost. But the unutterable will be—unutterably—contained in what has been uttered.” (Ludwig Wittgenstein, letter to Paul Engelmann, quoted in *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, p. 151.)
6. Imagine language elements as rocks thrown into a pool, generating waves forming interference patterns on the surface of the water. These interference patterns are analogous to meaning, or the communication function of language.
7. In an individual work, the graphic separation of elements (letters and words) across the language field opens a “space” for the elaboration of meaning.
8. Topographically, the (usually multiple) core meanings of each textual element are analogous to a compressed area of incident (engagement), or “hill”, sloping down through increasingly peripheral associations and interactions with the other elements (“hills”) of the field. While reading, one’s attention to these hills and valleys is like rain channelled into branching rivulets or paths as the senses of each reading unfold.
9. While variations of linguistic “intensity” (concentration, or “height”) occur across the field, all linguistic events are in a certain sense leveled; *i.e.*, allowed equal opportunity to engage attention. For example, texts have no beginnings or ends, no central focus, no univocal “narrative” the reader must follow. Rather, patterns of events unfold, whose relationships and associations are created by the reader through the complex history and desires brought to each reading.

10. In the language field, exclusively linear readings are not stressed, instead a matrixing of the meanings of each element (as well as the complex of relations between the fields of mind and world) is opened, encouraging multiple approaches to and readings through the network/field. The reader is encouraged to follow the multiple passages engendered by the interactions of each element with each and every other element. And each element merges into and infuses each of the others, so that, strictly speaking, there are no separate elements, only the field of interpenetrating events.
11. Compositional methods range across the spectrum uniting chance accumulation and elimination with structured composition, reflecting (embodying) current readings of the ways events unfold (in) the world.
 - 12.a. The intent of the work is to unfold (the reader's conceptions of) possibility.
 - 12.b. Local effects of the work include:
 - interrogating the notions of language, mind, and world; their separate constitutions and their complex intertwinings.
 - elaborating the (promiscuous) interpenetrability AND simultaneous disjunctions of the world(—)mind(—)language continu(a)um.
 - replacing linear reading styles with a matrixing mode of reading, which allows multiple approaches to, and multiple pathways through, a text.
 - leveling the affective content of each of the elements of language making up the text; *i.e.*, in the matrixing mode, each element and each aspect of each of the elements in the text at least begins with equivalent emphasis. Individual readings will of course emphasize certain elements and de-emphasize others.
 - reformulating dichotomies (pairs of opposites such as rational/irrational, self/world, inside/outside) as continua; *i.e.*, fields of manifold perspectives, each point a center radiating throughout the entire field: "distinctions melt and are"
 - 12.c. The intent is not restricted to intention.

CYDNEY CHADWICK

I recently read a review of a postmodern anthology of stories. The reviewer cited certain characteristics of the postmodern, then took exception to the stories because they contained these characteristics. I wouldn't cite this instance of stupidity in responsible places if it were an exception. But such stupidity is widespread; people don't listen to themselves. And I'm glad because it gives me something to write about. My poems may, at first, feel difficult but that's only because they're not realism. Nothing against Realism, but that's what we've had, and so it's there, as David Bromige says, whenever we read. Realism is there, Romanticism is there, Neo-Classicism is there, all of literature is there—waiting, between the lines. At least this is the case if we have educated ourselves, if we have historical perspective...

Sadly there are those who think that literature begins and ends with Realism. That is what they cut their teeth on, that's all they want to eat today. They confuse a period with eternity, a stage with a genre. Realists didn't write Realism, they wrote to extend what writing had been up until then. Later, it became Realism. By then the time was ripe for something else.

But as I say I depend upon people's blind spots, my own among them, to generate my writing. As what do I call my writing? I don't call it anything, beyond the titles of my books and my prose pieces and my poems. They are what they are. I'm not working to fit a mould. Of course I use words that are in the dictionary, and my syntax is often like that found in literary works and people's mouths. Did you follow my previous remarks? The writing is a grid. As you read, you automatically project "Realism," "Romanticism," etc. into the interstices. It were redundant, for me to perform realism before eyes whose brains already have that worldview stored. Mind you, it's a redundancy that is still the most welcome gesture in the keeps of the brahmins and most groves of academe. But it's my calling to offer what you *can't* obtain elsewhere.

Theory is in my unconscious. I don't think about it during the act of writing. With poetic intuition, I choose—lines, words, phrases; events, acts, gestures. Even as I am the editor of a journal, so I am the editor of what eventuate as my poems. *This* will go very well with *That*. Ask me how I know? The proof is in the experience.

Granted, a risk. Risk-free literature?

My journal has been termed avant-garde, and that's o.k. by

me. But I wouldn't make a big deal of it. Whatever the governing mode, novelty has always been the point. It may be 1720, you may feel obliged to write in riming couplets, but if you don't give it a twist they'll find you dull indeed...Novelty, because only by removing dead gestures and their buried phrases can you revive the shock of the familiar. Humans are creatures of habit, luckily. But the downside of habit is cliched living. And art struggles—or glides on by—to revivify. Writing isn't done by clubs, although they may facilitate its reception. Writing is lonely work, albeit it may make you happier than anything else. It speaks not only of our common experiences—our generation's, of being severed, a person with a mind. "look on my works, ye mighty, and despair." I can't explain *me*. I can't explain my writings. Here we, nonetheless, are.

SEAN FINNEY

Poetry is a joke, a joke where you'd put things together that don't go together. We are all comedians; we all fan the spark that pops briefly the joints of whatever we labour under. And we are all surrealists; we can put anything together, without people thinking we're trying to be funny. What makes us funny is what makes us successful surrealists. It's either there or it's not. The writer should feel it. You can't tell the same jokes to everyone, but whatever humor and whatever audience, it first has to be funny to you. Poetry is a lot like those jokes you only tell yourself, but now you get to dress them up in a wonderful tradition, and they become earnest.

When I write I change my mind. The tension between times, thoughts, images, words, the tension of how many choices you have, is in the poetry. There are voices, and you have choices, and improving your writing is not about finding more voices, its about telling them to shut up. Your mind forms a lot of words. You are in the poem, you search for more, and forget the thread and are thrown forward by the inertia of the clever and quick sounding. The more I write the more I am able to fight this—and now my poems are really boring.

Are the things we crossed out in the poem? And what about the things we thought and didn't write, the false turns we didn't take, the better poems lost in the crush? They're all present and the universe rolls itself into a ball and big Celtic spirals, pyramids, Brahmans, mystical loves of Christ, ohms, and lotuses

come flying out. Everything is in the poem; we all write the same poem; this is a poem; my blank is a poem. Well...at least some of the excluded should get in. The tension lets it in, through ambiguity, rhythmical lapse, incongruity, and maybe the mystical connection I just maligned.

Leaving the poem, the tension in life behind the poem really lets things in. If you're tense enough about something you can wrench a poem out. A poem should have its hands everywhere in your life: in the parts that jar—and the poem is the compromise. Because the paper is so pristine, the word you didn't write and the knots you can't solve, can both exist there. The process mirrors the result: the excluded get in as you write, and the incompatible end up on the page.

Choose the unstable that wants to be something else.

BENJAMIN FRIEDLANDER

October 1992:

formally speaking, my work has previously been involved
with the articulation of thought through the density
of sounds knotted & unable to free themselves
from articulation

not writing and speech
but dictation and recitation

a heart doubled over

a heart doubled back

*you were kind to me
weren't you
and someone being tidy
has stapled my soul
to your heart*

-Eileen Corder

— — —

January 1993:

liquidity,
poems that move with the sensuousness of water,
or slowly, like honey, but anyhow *fall*

"in love with thought"

*all intellect is in this fingering of time advanced
that knows no horizon of learning—
the reaches of this aptitude for exacting measures
due the heart
waits upon*

-Robert Duncan

— — — —

Carla,

the temporal

speaks time

Calling a name

nimbler than number

Knowledge

a calculated fury

Burn your incense—ego's aroma

cognoscente

— — — —

If a piece of string were exactly the same all along, however thin it was, however great the weight hung on it, and however much you jerked it, it could not break—it wouldn't know *where* to break.

-Paul Valéry

PHILIP GOOD

Environment shapes thought as does the time including the future that might be visiting us now. Does the knowledge of the poet need to be understood by the reader to get a positive response? Is the poet actually familiar enough with the world and people's minds to respond in language different yet responsive to the environment?

To produce art we can leave it up to chance or controlled chance and even use the computer. I prefer to use spirit and ethereal knowledge leaping about the place—having very little or no obedience to standards and traditional ethics. The pleasure of sound also controls the direction and can even lead to strange grammar. I hope to relay subconscious thoughts that might be available to the readers own forms of consciousness.

Often actual occurrences become incorporated into the art along with lines that might be ambiguous in meaning. It is finished when it feels finished and not always at a predetermined point. Sometimes we wish to summon the muse—a flow of the mind connected to a magic quality. And the reader can be anyone from a new formalist to the baker.

It's odd being a poet in the 20th century existing among the writers that exclude the self in the name of art. I believe the self is always expressed through art, but not like the way you could ever talk to a friend over a cup of coffee.

EMILY GREENLEY

WRITING IS MY VITAL HABIT

When I write, I am “expressing” something: writing is the formulation of an internal (emotional, intellectual) process which by its intensity or originality demands to be given form.

Good writing, further is the *making of an expression* that transforms the feeling or thought beyond mere transcription.

To “express oneself” and to “make an expression” are of course not disconnected activities. The second, however, to the extent to which a new or singular statement is constituted, is always operative in good writing.

When I started writing at age 15 I used the form (in this case, poetry) to say what I felt: both components, the *generative* (what I call the “process which demands to be given form”) and

the *generated* (the verbal overlay, or *expression*) were active and interacting. But because I was inexperienced, the work distorted the underlying impulse by a rococo language.

The pressure of criticism from outside and changes in the writer produced a new writing, one which I think has reached relative maturity in the last few years. My writing does, in the act of it, perform a cathartic function. Sometimes it must be the only means by which I can exorcise, or repress, anxiety or despair.

With the poem in my hands I have proof that I can *make* something: the words I have set down are apt to carry unintended meanings that, in combination, illuminate or complicate the original message. For a finished poem is anything but bare statement: it is a complex of sound and sense, an "expression" which, like a facial expression, can be projected and received in many ways while retaining an essential identity.

Freud says that the artist is "originally...(one) who turns from reality." Rejection of reality, whether chosen by or forced on one, means insanity. Freud sees the restoration of the artist in others' acceptance of his work as an alternate construction of reality. What this means, I think, is that the artist's success derives from a simultaneous rejection of reality and insanity. It is true at least for me that writing is a conscious and calculated activity, one which is impossible when I am truly distressed.

"Past distress," though, is usually my theme: no matter how recent or continuing the trouble, I am able to construe it as resolved in the saying of it.

Note: This statement accompanied ten poems Emily Greenley submitted in her senior year at Harvard for the Rona Jaffe/Radcliffe College Prize in Creative Writing. She did not get the prize. On her copy of the title page she wrote "lost this one!" and at the end of her statement after this sentence, "The prize money would help me tremendously through a crucial and financially insecure time," she wrote "Oh well!" I have taken the title from part of the statement not reprinted here. I taught Emily Greenley during her freshman year at Harvard and since October 1990 when she took her life I have been, without formal designation, her literary executor.

-William Corbett

MARK HAMMER

POESIS

The particulars of any writing are rooted in the possibilities that each mind inherently determines as the contexts from which words may be laid down. Singular. Social. Communal. Measured, all.

I am especially drawn to Novalis' sense that "Poetry is generation," a living extension of the world, wherein said WORLD is perceived as an evolving structure of information that unfolds and embraces its participants. Also, his sense of the poet as "an actual world in miniature" is appealing in its perception of the individual's participation in a larger unity, leading inevitably to the common. These notions where maker and artifact become coincidental extensions of each other, able to construct and impart variations and realities of their own, propose such WORLD within the boundaries of each poem, each extending psyche, concurrently.

As each image develops, Duncan's notion of weaving the tapestry/rug and intermingling available thereafter is helpful here, regarding the literal MAKING/CONSTRUCTION where image is that which determines the primary force within the poem, be it visual or sonic. In the end, from Spicer in a letter to Blaser RE Duncan's sense of the PATH of writing, to be unending, unrealized and certainly unable to be single and without context. The range, then, extends throughout all of the writing, recording singular flights within the human simulacrum.

One last time, Duncan in a letter to H.D. 10/2/60, when he proposes "Texts have a life design of their own." (Lapis Press, 1992). This and of course Creeley's triumphant sense of one's inability to anticipate what one literally HAS TO SAY, make a comfortable and variable space to play. For I desire to make things, be of use in whatever manner possible, by enveloping those properties of common spirit/soul and kneading them as articulate vision. This is magic.

And the amoeba, whose movement is determined by perpetually altering its shape, is most elemental in that as finite being mirrors the language I propose to have as mine, so the poem transfigures at each perception.

Finally, we remain within and are bound to the hieroglyph. Each sequence moving unendingly as images build each on the former, as serial sequence. And in returning there, to find complex world played out only to engulf its former self and

measure said accumulations as breath may emphasize poem as utterance, to be seen, to be heard, as one touches another, in continual suspension beyond belief. Only to concede this next, and this next, and rediscover that basic space where the species tells.

NICOLE HOELLE

MYSTERIES AND MONTAGES ACCORDING TO MUSIC

There are certainly those poems that are more musically inclined and aesthetically appetizing than others. The process I use in selecting language for a poem is the one element of poem production I have not yet been able to confine to any formula, assign to any precise system of linear understanding. Within a scene or a memory, exists a sound. That sound persuades the development of a series of sounds, that subsequently translate into language. The experience I am subject to, while amidst this sensory explosion is that of being plucked out of my habitual self, for a moment, enabled to dictate these rhythmic and linguistic modes of sensuality.

Meanwhile, there is the initial infliction of the senses that produces these less understandable artistic instincts. That is: the muse, the model for the poem. I do not earn material for my poems through any deliberate assault of my environment. My poems, rather are administered by the insistent aesthetic that lives between this moment (this song, a certain voice in the room, the saying of a name, the familiar idea of Spring happening outside) and my past.

The two acts communicate with each other, persuading the cultivation of the poem. There is an aesthetic outburst that occurs between one's past and present. We call it memory (though we will never know to what extent it pertains to the actual events being remembered). The present is always having a jumbled presentation of its past, donated to it, and I am constantly translating the two according to each other, entertaining the infinite discrepancy that exists between my history and the present.

On the other hand, it is exceptionally important that one admit his/her inevitable contact with memory, through this moment, while still acknowledging and including the momentary surroundings, as fresh, organic ideas, aside from one's own

link to them. Otherwise, the poem is terminally spliced with miscellaneous symptoms of sentimentality, lacking the necessary promotion of some universal thread of feeling.

Additionally, I recognize poems as instruments to be used in the never ending investigation of everything. There is something occupying the core of existing, here, now, with optics, nerves, fluids, exclamations, exaltations and griefs, that escapes me. There are elusive ideas clustering at the center of everything, something about our daily admission to being alive, that we will never thoroughly grasp.

I have clamored after these mysteries of life, attempting to dismember the reason for existence, unravel the meaning and source of love, creation, God, etc. However, there is no code to claim the authentic significance for living.

Therefore, I attempt to write off of these multitudinous questions, of what we are doing here after all, why we are stranded in these portions of skin and bones, in these individual timetables.

Rather than using poems as attempts to force my way into life, to unveil its elusive identity I invest my poems in the prolonged examination of its inherent mystique.

It seems that the most poignant poems are those that exemplify the sound of passions (the sad and silly kaleidoscopes and montages that are locked in all of us, and examined in the all around hungry solitude....), in relation to passions' inability to understand itself, estimate its essential reason.

For years poets have been, and will be, grappling with plaguing questions (*i.e.* what does all this mean?) and constantly missing the reply by a second, and will in the meantime make marvellous poems, because that's where the possibility for passion is: in these mysteries and questions that will forever elude and attempt to be understood in religion, drugs and science.

Some night last week, I sat down, restless, beside someone whom I thought I knew, but was really only on the verge of possibly knowing. There were the all around sad, hungry sounds of the middle night. I did not just hear those vagrant sounds, nor did I only see this (next to me) body. All my senses were employed by the deeper, vaguer ideas.

I am wanting to probe these ambiguities and futilities, slosh around inside them, and come out with nothing, except the sound that is the sound of the universe questioning itself and its own giddy and strange exclamations of desire.

KAREN KELLEY

SIMULATED POETICS AS BODY IN SPACE (MEADOWS OF ENTHUSIASMS)

The barbell should be in the top position of the squat rack. In the dream state, languages and images are wedded together in a way that seems alien only because you have forgotten their great alliance. *find*

*panties in suitcase—still have tags (surprised,
since I've worn them). now they're a bag of Mallomars I
open—discover Brian's already been eating them (where's
hole in bag?)*

*Sita Lakshmi...was allowed one meal a day, and a little milk
and fruit in the evening. Step under the barbell and place the
barbell behind your neck and across your shoulders. Stand
erect and step back.* Initially, language was meant to express
and release, not to define and limit. *some joke*

*where another man grabs my ankle, holds it up
to the sky—about how I've slept with all of them.*

*Morning and night, she
made the round of the temple one hundred and eight times, imp-
loring the goddess to hear her and calling her by her innumerable
names. Your feet should be approximately shoulder-width
apart, and your head should be kept up at all times. Con-
sciousness is far more mobile than you realize. I'm running
away,*

jumping and flying over snowy hills.

*As is
customary, to avoid any mistake, at each round she put a pebble
in a small sack hanging from a tree. Bend your knees and hips,
and lower your buttocks slowly into a full squat. Events as you
know them are but fragments of other happenings in which you
are also intimately involved. spiralling*

90 feet up.

*hear him calling for me—as if
the landscape's wired for sound.*

*This time of preparation
lasted six months. Do not bounce in and out of the bottom posi-
tion. The inner senses have a strong immediacy, a delicious
intensity that your outer senses lack. here the ten pound plates*

vary in weight according to—what?

*they're being made heavier by something immaterial (images in
my mind of us going to bed—these the inner scenarios that drive*

us

come true?)

When the six months came to an end she was to make the round of the temple for the last time; she must not walk, but roll round it on the rocky ground. Return to the standing position in a smooth fashion. Take a deep breath, and repeat for twenty repetitions. This is a psychological organization, consisting of a selection of chosen probable events—shot of me

*leaning over back of the bench as he shows me
(the beauty and elegance of the human form? how to clean
the weight to my shoulders?)*

At last the decisive moment arrived. Assume a supine position crossways on a bench with your shoulders in contact with the bench and your head and lower body relaxed and off the bench. The psyche forms events in the same way that the ocean forms waves—my face touching his hair.

Sita Lakshmi was led by the priests into the temple. A dumbbell, held on one end, is positioned over your chest in a straight-armed manner. The final trigger for actualization may come from the waking or dream states, but it will represent the final factor needed—the quickening of inspiration, desire, or purpose...now

*we're naked in the kitchen
having sex.*

There, behind the altar, was a stone bench where the suppliant must await in a holy sleep the judgment of the goddess. Take a deep breath and lower the dumbbell behind your head....that will suddenly activate the initial psychological organization as a physical occurrence. push wall

*until it
collapses.*

Lying on the hard bench, she implored the goddess with fervent prayers until the moment of sleep. It is important to keep your arms straight during the movement and to emphasize the stretching of the torso when the dumbbell is behind your head. Momentarily a field of relatedness is set up that is highly charged, one that provides an inner path by which probable events can flow into your area of recognized events. past the patio

*a huge riverbed, almost dry. sheets of rock
stretched into the sky, water trickling over*

RANDOM TRANSLATION: THE BODY, WITH ALL ITS INTIMACIES, BECOMES MAGICAL THROUGH EFFORTLESSNESS. YOU CAN GO AT THIS BUT ONCE—IN ONE SIDE AND OUT THE OTHER. GRACE LOVES THE CLAY IN SURRENDER TO THE OBJECT IT HAS IN VIEW. ATHLETICISM OF RAPTURE. YOU MUST DO IT. YOU CANNOT HELP DOING IT.

Then she had a dream:

Darden, Ellington. *New High-Intensity Bodybuilding*. New York: Putnam 1990.

Roberts, Jane. *The Nature of the Psyche: Its Human Expression*. New York: Simon & Shuster 1979.

Telliard, Ania. *Spiritual Dimensions*. London: 1961.

JOEL KUSZAI

from BROOKLYN YARDS

A flair for the dramatic—real life walking down into the subways departing [~~crossed-out, multinational corporation~~] Headquarters forever—into the subway loosening my tie hoping to never have to wear one but having no immediate plans for a job—returned.

A form containing itself, a process creating itself, beginning again. The biological metaphor I am quite familiar with now. That is, I realize that you're talking about a specific biologic process of reproduction in plants, and that [~~crossed out~~] is doing work on this for her thesis. So there is . kind of legitimacy to assigning it “initial” or “original” status as something you’re talking about and representing. This is why it works as an epigraph. In the poem, I’d rather hear more about the plant’s specific natural processes, or about the implied human parallels this trope stands for. In other words, “I ate my sister to harvest heat”—being more my type of line. As the specificity of the actual is everywhere apparent, and not as hidden in the flower’s picture. Down into the mythological heat (the eating the cannibalism of the family member) as well as the actual surface of what it says—which is blunt and open rather than muted and abstract.

78 Word and World

A gun under glass, says “of [*crossed out, poet hero*]”

A high school teacher who read my journal for a class project asked me why I was not writing about specific people. Thinking about this woman’s comments about this tendency—the apparent hesitation. About someone who was or is not there.

A jar full of lightning bugs.

Night in Black Sky

A plane sputters in rough fog
sputters in fog.

A Poetics

A pure gold saxophone shout
A small girl is standing on a car
A year since, my unborn
a part—so lips whisper
a passing
a political poem

above a ravine

after the accident
after the photo

after the police had finally answered
after the war, support payments to my grandmother for care of
my father and uncle were increased from 5 to 6 dollars a week
against the will
against this
against this

talking
all the butterflies in my stomach

eyes casting downward glances
all the things I’d heard her speak of
all words come to mean nothing
all work is human vain
all you ever wanted, or so you say,
all—which the rest of me

all—which the rest of me

Alleyway, as if the apples aren't enough
almost to the 21st Century

Ambulance and fire engines have red lights amidst the breaking of glass amidst luxury secretly starving and no country of mythological return. No nations, no states. Flux as money crosses borders irrespective. And not an image of the poet writing who does not remember writing what has just written. Writing as if there were no world before or after each word on its own with arrows of influence. "The prepositions handle nice on tight curves at high speeds, but what about the mileage?" Thinking in inferences. Do not clutter. Or be cluttered.

And that is the problem I am facing: if we are to tell our stories (should we?) why are they so much like coins or points of fear? The dim *pluie* narrative is.

and to whom are our stories but one at a time

the crux of art And the long lost element

And the war the word soars

And then she went out into the sunshine

And tight, tuned to pitch

Water, water was a theme for her

And what is love, but a dream of mutual intent. Abstract, fecund. And we are powerless to control it. Stateless—prisonerless—a baldspot in the upper atmosphere appears. The sun is that love roasts its family in sprinkled tears across ocean cake, above-the-real, on-the-real, *subbreal* [two-slab.] or *under-the-real*. Running simultaneous (co-eval)

backward—or those backward

and beer

beer garden

and began thinking

and begin

begs to be thrown from the second story window

and being born

blue

and bright

and bright
changing moons
charged with Sexual Abuse
cold men on museum steps
and cold confiscated them
and could tell you about it
could tell you about it
counting pennies
crabs and fish and sharks
and damaged

and experiment. Some nights
feasted on it
feeling pebbles under your sandaled feet
and fell apart
fell to sea
from not eating anything
the road that passes
furthering talk
and inner strength
and it

and it is good for thinking here
it won an award
and junk—thoughts worth rust

just remembrance

ANDREW LEVY

Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.

—Wittgenstein

Everything that I have written has shown me something different. Rebelliousness in a clear way could be something different. The person who does *this* writing is someone I'd seldom say I know. All those configurations for which that person has no words. I listen but try to let listening go. It doesn't see through *these* words because these eyes are expressed through language.

The always unrequited remnant pushing shopcart for bottles and cans. Show off shadow unloyalty. I believe in an amodal reality, experience of that, though amodal reality names a concept referring to an experiential world and one's correspondence to that world with no correlatives in words, is unnameable. I am a religious thinker who believes in an originary world outside mankind's linguistic representations. It is unknowable, and I do not find that terrifying. Trusting prose so quickly leads one into a questioning of beliefs. Trusting it enough to complete a sentence. There are no separations in our bodies. There are separations in everything else and our use and understanding of language has helped us place them there. If language increases our enlightenment and alienation about the amodal and modal worlds, speed contributes to an acceleration of both that prior to the advent of telecommunications and computer technology would have been unimaginable. Paradoxically, electronics has made the world larger, not smaller. I do see that as a sometimes terrifying reality. Words haven't died, though they've grown more cumbersome in our hands. Distances once exterior are now internalized, joined like magic, and made visceral through technological apparatuses which possess little analogical or metaphorical resemblance to the body's sensory modalities of perception. Very few people are free.

No specific instance has a name. These different temporal phenomena exist in intimate proximity in the thoughts and actions of people and friends, in the architectures they live in. When that variety speaks that is what I enjoy. To imagine oneself as a varietal identity, trusting a negative capability that risks one's sense of self-possession and singularity to let the world of flood. To feel part of a tradition must mean that there are no separations in our bodies. Like that, some things must be of experiences unaccompanied by words. When they do come, when I do not seek them out, they're gifts. By too many onslaughts becomes its tooth...to evoke the surface of a pool buffeted by the wind. The simplest errands filled with fun. Lines from old poems come up in memory, intermingle with those more recent turning configurations I call poems into something for which I have no explanation. A book of the deepening of beds, a palimpsest of different informations rhythmically and tonally juxtaposed. "God knows where we're headed," sponged on the horizon. That softness of the five o'clock sun. Echoes of

resemblance, & nothing's posse. Anything more to see doesn't keep.

Everytime I open a book and begin reading, I walk out of *my* self into another dimension. There are never too many places where one can lie down. You lay the book aside (or turn away from your computer screen) and close your eyes. The implicate order that would seem to "underwrite" the sensorium within which one lives, the *unsayable* principles of things in existence, causes one's pen or one's fingers to cease from the task of reassembling letters and words into the uses to which *you* would put them. This temporary silence carries a heavier freight. And fright too. I acquiesce to it, and have come to place a faith in this process as against intellectualizing it as something one might master. Rather, it is something that I have received, and that will be taken away.

My partner commented that I had the annoying habit, whenever we went for a drive, of reading out loud words used on roadside billboards. Banal things, like, "Honey-Glazed Donuts 10 for \$1"—"You've Come A Long Way, Baby!" and "Best Gas For Less." It seemed something silly that I did for entertainment, and to aggravate my partner. Later, I began to sense that my fascination with those signs consisted in their use of language in a way different from how I like to experience it, that is, as a medium for dialogue with other people engaged in communities of discourse. Instead, these signs approached a meaninglessness, mere signals for triggering the consumptive cell. Something in me registered that visualization of linguistic phenomena as novel, ironic, and I now think, cynical. These were not words for barter, but broadcasts about which one received no invitation. I recited them to intervene, to counter the inanity I felt was being imposed upon the visual arena of public space. But for the manufacturers of such signs, *readers* didn't exist. The sovereign individual did. What was being presented spoke of a serious disregard for a socially democratic compact between people, and manipulated that disrespect for profit. The realization that "ambient languages are increasingly commodity" (Alan Davies), provided one of the first insights I'd had into the many ill-consequences of our capitalist political economy. The reader's experience is *managed* without request for his or her active participation. It was around this time that I began to turn from playing music, and considering myself to be a musician, to

playing with words. That work I believe to be a most serious responsibility.

If writing and reading are to be generative technologies, we need to recognize and acknowledge what an intense affective experience in words can be—a promise discovered or re-enacted there—*against* the mindless regurgitation and expansion of a venal climate and finite world: the Administration and Militarizing of the banality of the lie and *its* mystery. “as our culture becomes more and more bureaucratized, ‘success’ as an artist must begin to be seen as our ability to resist that process of institutionalization which robs us of the opportunity to take personal responsibility for the meaning we make. It is in this sense that art is inherently political, not as content to be illustrated; it is in those terms that we see what is possible—the meaning that we make as artists speaks of this” (Joseph Kosuth, “On Picasso”).

COLLEEN LOOKINGBILL

WRITING THE WRITTEN

Writer’s universe still to write with blood reservoir of language creates a need for it. Way applied as finished surface a variety from analogical use of general into the cold split second flaw allows light in every poem deciphered as so much contemporaneous detour. Assume poetic genres given utterance within texts casually meet in necessity multiple locations and multiple voices.

Woman woman, women have begun our feminine sense to distribute presumptions more as being, more which asks. Hand wounded by mouth drowns under water then requests air, air. Our female in purgatory understanding makes pleasure no further away than sex in a verb. Mouth in hand kisses mouth, breast, nipple, lower. Next morning in my willing illusion, metaphor would fall apart relaxing presence of the body. Statues awaken, walls have ears, an aesthetic position of the modern poet. Chest, thighs illuminated in the dark void careful scar on shoulder seen in a mirror leads to an old French hotel.

Considerations of a work of art boundaries hiding from men explain it and set it up. Who needs favor into an older world where white ballet slippers remain outside a door where a child is wrapped in bells?

Things do slow up particulars of life, not in ideas but direct comparisons make form one after another breaking the impression. A long time to tell a certain myth, to understand what it is, to repeat corrosion for purpose. Rival writes process pseudological breaking up clear sound and opaque sound. Immediacy of order. Emotion meeting a poem aside from music, image, logopoeia is not a veil it's a scarf. American composition something coming out by words' eccentric interest. Write distinct and individualized truth a shadow of meaning. Precisely what is happening isn't finished less a work of art censorship called taste. Rouse proof a new way only to win us over avoid word "poetic" blowing through because it has to be.

Fortune loves us readable, exciting, superb new translations, plays, texts in every library and taught in most colleges. If the pipes don't freeze, we reach a happy compromise, learn how to use the revolver, risk the snowball through the heart, and clothed elegantly twitter from our opera boxes. But that star pentagram branded onto our face leaks blood on the white snow and the man in a tricorn hat watches a suspended sphere appear arcing from nowhere and then returning. What is not chance, what is coincidence, circumstance, willingness to be opened on our knees at all points an energy discharge. First I didn't hear it then I did, then the silence resembles it on paper as a white oxen looks like a map of the world.

Perception pre-verbal creates her city of desertion torn between aloofness and hyperbolic wishful thinking. Repetitive perplexity can neither console nor comfort in the element it presupposes. Unknown commonplace styles attempt to come to terms with reticence and modesty impersonal focus from humane aliveness. Clairvoyance complete destruction integrates power to say nothing forgetting the future where you are already waiting.

MELANIE NEILSON

How to refrain from residual hiddenness. Translate hesitation and return to a most positive apprehension, a clearing, coming to, a describable self and circumstances. My own emergent consciousness a child being read to, pretending to read, approach of/towards the world with all its charm and terror. A child imitates her father reading to her. Diminutive revolutionary, excruciating omnipotence and sense of the breadth of what one doesn't know. Advantage of earliest reading unique as anyone's? Only temporary the feeling of being without company. Details, detours, tracing back and forward, anxious leaning into the most true longing after mastery: recognition, experience and reflection. Great page about to be turned, held lightly in the hand. What I yearned to be, still am, was, will be. How different. How much the same. I return always it seems to the scene of apprehension with skills quite unsupported by theory. Indisputably unique one's reading. Useful, however halting, incompletely formed, the description of means by which one achieves one's purpose. Results valuable beyond the technique they are achieved with, valuable rather for a humanity, expression of hope, invitational communication. Speaking directly to another, plainly self-defining.

Recurrents at the core. How what I make/select/arrange might tell of what I am made. (At my shore unlike anyone's *listening*.) I take a walk. I swim. I trust myself. I don't. Confidence as familiar as fear. Page about to be just light in the right hand. To have history at all, shared experience, models, imitators, being one. My own collecting ground a singular constellation of the minor, miscellaneous, smallest sentiments, led by and learning, being of the nature of plurals. Being one practicing that which imitates by language alone. This form of imitation without a name. If communication (and mastery) is based upon imitation, and the shaping of speech the same, what would be the plainest contribution to my work being "understood"? One understands described experience in terms of one's actual experience, by numerous partial identifications with numerous imitations, by another, of herself. Recognition reinvents, rediscovered, the solitary walker (reader or writer), invites the potential for nonconforming discontinuities in every company.

When I return again and again to texts and photographs

used as sources to write (which I do often), I engage in a little private imitation of what I desire to understand or love. A kind of thing gardened in time, followed through, that might happen.

BRIAN SCHORN

TOWARD A POETICS OF TAKING:

Or, Origin Out Holes

Once upon a time...glorious time. Long, nervous hands skilful with blades. Another time, a continual grip into which came the stretch of writing on water. Hatched from chance and out of the sand. Once upon a time the terrible air ran amuk. The sun (also): an indefinitely ravaging idea. To write against the proliferating movements, in the pure loss of common sense. The circumstances undone, indescribable. Even taking place no longer taking place.

TAKE 1

The *Morula* cut-up lashing at the wrist line, the newsprint left dangling. All this in the confine of burrows. Hand lump another time in the making. Gunfire so familiar, the way the mouth takes form from the anal bead. Speaking role elevated into kingdom. Animal divisions as fingers, as mortar driven by teenage must. Dirty (t/b)owel embossed shell shock. Those glorious little mulberries, alive in the opposite of my taking. You took so that I might hatch from your taking. To be born took. Another time divine. Lead dust piling up in a solid ball of suggestive cell tight. Designed long loss equivalent to the linguistic organ of incoming tongue buds. The fruitless speaking into one's own cell muck. The writing already taking water from the bag chance. Cleavage intact through periods performing acrobatic blade grips. Make that a pencil tip. So rapid since the stretch pumping sand. The dune forced to disclose the writing, the terrible air rising from the half-mind/mouth. Movement in a pure coma. Write against the wall of my rectum, write sun, write indefinitely so that this said thought is luck or meat. Take some.

Being more insignificant, if possible, would eliminate the longings. Being nothing, and everything able to be, to show the Good and to give it a good fight in order to get away from it. Alas, the monster, still existing, gives birth to: revolts, demands! To be nothing: more and too difficult. Too many solicitations. So, writer...?

TAKE 2

The *Blastula* reentered, regrouped a dowry of irrigated food paste. No more time-outs implying pencil beyond sorting. Last night's pork bone carries a dual significance: 1) nothing; 2) longing. Demand: I am no more significant being this, or, if possible, that. My still existing crude religion carried through in all details, in all writing inner cell mass. Rodez microscope led astray, say the open mouth willing, saw vestments. So what the monster divine. Mother circulating Good too difficult. Everything distended out through the writing (h/m)ole. The writing, for lack of a better term. In order to pull more of the trigger, chigger off. Get away from the make-up. Go see how you might shit the fight out. Talk to me canal width in so many vowels except...Alas, birth removed from luck, bad. Go now. Go sideways into an already evident lapse of opening. Go and be nothing. Be long. Take what?

A bit later still, to be without a voice. And a bit later still, the washing of the stains and modification of the colours and of the shock. Persistence, however, of the hypnotizing tragic. One becomes inured to everything: to work. Questions. Answers (true, false, imbecilic, partial, threatening and others). Betrayals?

TAKE 3

The *Gastrula* voice gut humming daylight. Avid piggy range about thick, about a spreading of work: to push a pencil with persistent question. Mean that this open is washing. A bit of the hypnotizing false apparently undergoes complexity. Dorsal views keep coming: column work to be written in. View inured to this: The Trajan inscription ANSWERS FOR THE TAKING. Come and take. Come over here and take this, this is to take proliferating. Later bits stain a manner old. I shall tell you everything partial, I shall write, I shall converge at the imbecilic

divine. No more colours true into controversy. Essentially, without (), however with due respect. A book already started does not remain long. My tongue thought bound book rest. Set in lead is logical, is an outgrowth of the (p/b)ush. Make a book inside me shut. Close the open open. Do more of this to not do this a book. The writing here not betrayed a bit. Still later, some fabrication of restraint, a simple white cloak, laced the same. Ring the origin becoming others. Take one.

Quotes from *The Death of André Breton* by Jean-Yves Collette.

NANCY SHAW

March 2, 1993

Dear Kevin Killian:

About my work—my intentions are eclectic, but I'll reveal some of the details—of course none of this has anything to do with my personality. These influences are partial and generative rather than genealogical and ineffable. I am a bibliophile, before I am a family member.

You're clear on one thing: affect and exaggeration are overriding tropes and guiding principles as are they major taboos to conventions of well-crafted, 'elegant' prose and poetry. There is no better way, however, to examine a system than to look at what it expels. Simply put, affect, exaggeration and gossip are prevalent forms of communication with a special relationship to that little thing called love. Post-war Hollywood Melodrama is a genre dependent on this type of expression—deliciously rife with emotional excess, but always subsuming that excess through narratives of containment and incorporation. By inhabiting nodes of excess, I hope to enact a poetic arrest. This is a method that I liken to my photographic examination of cinematic frames. In so doing, I attempt to accumulate a litany of all that changes from one frame to the next, thereby illuminating the most minor details crucial to the seamless constructions of such stories.

The liminal which Laura Mulvey describes as the middle part of the story where contradictions, details, enigma and objects are set up to be overcome through narrative closure—is another point of engagement. Rules are suspended if only momentarily allowing for emergent articulation in overdetermined fields. Here emotion and detail are relegated to hidden and invisible spaces camouflaged as important sites of hegemonic inscription. At the same time, this very disavowal provides a site from which to mess up dominant meaning. The liminal is where unformed desire can be developed into a language of transformation and resistance. In my poetic investigation of this middle ground, I employ such devices as repetition, rhetorical flourishes, grammatical twists, rhymes, lies, jokes and riddles, juxtapositions and spatial positioning. To digress for a moment—outside of my mini-melodramas or demi-pastorals—this methodology fits into a larger political strategy. It seems evident that totalizing political discourses and their claims of universality on both the left and right are defunct and ineffectual when considered in light of recent discussions of difference (in feminism, psychoanalysis, neo-colonialism, queer theory and strategies taken around anti-racism and AIDS). Throughout these critical positions, demi-interventions appear as the only viable site of resistance and transformation. In stating this I hover around a deceptively seamless addage of Jeff Derksen's—*Texit shouldn't be less complex than one's own subjectivity, and perhaps in some ways they can't be*—figuring the site of resistance and change as entirely partial and momentary as the complexity of subjectivities and their determinations are unable to be fully represented in writing, or, anything else for that matter.

You ask about my allusions to cinema. Feminist film theory is key. Apart from its analysis of narrative which I've mentioned, I'm struck by the use of psychoanalysis, especially in relation to notions of subjectivity that take into account the unconscious on the one hand, and cultural and historical contingencies on the other, figuring identities as partial and provisional constantly uprooting entrenched determinations of difference—particularly those of masculinity and femininity. For feminists, this allows for a mobility that generates new discursive positions while rigorously contesting hegemonic inscription.

Freud informs my work. I have appropriated key concepts

such as scopophilia from which the title of my book *Scopocentric* derives. (You're right again, this coined term can be defined as the government of the eye or the rule of the gaze. Scott Watson looked up the etymology—it is part of the Greek word *skopos* which equals watcher or spy and a mark to shoot at as well as the verb *krateo*, to be strong, to rule. I love your research: *scop* equals Old English bard or poet and *crai*, member of the dominant class. This supports a plethora of connotation I attempt to infer by linking the cinematic, psychoanalytic and poetic which obviously have much too much in common. And of course the class issue is pertinent. The hermetic system of which I speak reeks terribly of upper-middle-classishness).

Back to Freud and more about film. First Freud. I have borrowed heavily from his case studies where the twists and turns of his narrative provide interesting links between the discursive boundaries of scientific observation and novelistic narrative—a hybrid space full of poetic gems and anomalies. Second, in my “Cine-Poem” and “Hair in a Knot,” I am concerned with the Russian avant garde’s notion of progress which invests cinema with utopian potential. Instead of celebrating the cinema, its dynamism and possibilities as a futuristic and socialist image-machine, my cine-poems are textual knots suggesting a bleaker side of the cinematic apparatus—its propensity adheres to rigid fictions of identification which I hope to unfix in activating these historically specific investments in democratizing representation in my own work. From painter Mina Totino, I have gleaned the notion of tattooing and emblem-making to the extent that I consider the word clusters in the above mentioned poems as textual tattoos. These methods of marking function as a counter-inscription—a means of marking which reveals to the dominant the difference on which it depends yet disavows in its system of ascetic and insidious power.

While continuing with the cine-poems, I plan to write more “Dear M” letters. For your information “M” and “L” can be read as generic figures. However, in my private realm of reference they were written as a response to Lisa Robertson “XECOLGUE” addressing the “City Eclogues” of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. As we fondly refer to her, Lady M’s 18th-century mock pastorals analyze her social milieux through gossip and intrigue. Dodie Bellamy’s Mina Harker letters are important libidinally charged semi-fictionalized accounts of her

social scene. I am drawn to letters because they are a flexible, associational and elliptical forum for ideas as part of the dross of daily life. (Don't get me wrong though—I deeply enjoy the rigours of the letter's more formal cousin, the essay.)

For the moment this is all I can think of. We will no doubt speak soon.

Yours, Nancy Shaw

P.S. My talk of excess is not some harkening to a reactionary form of expressionism. I am uninterested in elevated or ener-vated feeling and emotional authenticity. To reiterate, to analyze to excess is to study the limits of any given discursive system where excess is figured as impossibility. Nevertheless, this offers a space of possibility and desire. I suppose if I were to sum it up, I'd have to paraphrase Kevin Davies's incisive comment that my work constructs narratives of seeing while picturing 'romance' as a repressive apparatus that works against desire.

COLE SWENSEN

I'm going to center this around an attempt to resolve a recognition of a linguistically constructed world-view with an unremitting sense that there does exist a territory of impression not accessible by language. The exploration of such a territory seems to me to be the particular domain of the arts. Poetry, as it stands at a point of intersection between linguistic and artistic expression, should be in an ideal position to put this paradox into an interesting kind of motion, thereby exposing more of this territory to expressibility.

In relation to this, it is necessary to consider the ramifications of an immanence within language, (as opposed to a transcendent model), linked with a necessity to maximize the performative in specifically poetic language, so that it can be caused to "show" "that which cannot be said." It is only in this way that poetic language can function to expand the territory of the expressible within a given culture.

By such an emphasis on immanence and performativity, I do

not mean to deny the referential function of language; in fact, such an emphasis re-enforces it; the capacity for reference is both inevitable and important. I am interested, however, in exploring ways to decrease the distance inherent in representation—to replace representation with a presentation that fuses the word with the world it presents. This perhaps entails using reference in increasingly complex ways, or in ways less direct than that common in “daily language use.”

And not to deny art as an end in itself, poetry, like any cultural manifestation, has a role in the larger culture and something to offer the society it serves; it also has an obligation to that society, which, given the hegemony of linguistically-centered cultural understandings, represents an immense potential for a kind of social change as various as it is driven from an aesthetic perspective.

Translation offers perhaps the most immediate and concrete site for such change as it can work toward an internationalism and against nationalistic tendencies by undermining the barrier-function of language. I would like to touch briefly (and therefore admittedly in a reductive fashion) on four points at which translation engages with linguistic boundaries.

The first is its impossibility—it is impossible to truly translate a poem. But, as Ortega y Gasset has said: “This wedding of reality with the demon of what is impossible supplies the universe with the only growth of which it is capable.”² An acceptance of impossibility abolishes the preconceived destination of a word or phrase being transformed by translation and establishes a potential for it to realize unforeseen instances of expression; it is in this way that impossibility operates here as a release, for it is against a mobile wall of impossibility that translation can gradually expand the field of possible expression. Impossibility must not be seen as a symptom of failure, but as an opportunity to investigate the role of materiality, and as a testimony of the non-finite and irreducibly diverse potential of language. And once the translation of poetry is relieved of the burden of being possible, it is also relieved of the burden of being an “it,” a thing, a noun, and can be returned to its nature as process, as verb.

A second point is translation’s relationship to institutions. An institution, though composed of individuals, has its own needs, projects, and desires that are not necessarily those of or

representative of any of the individuals of which it is composed; therefore it is important not to let institutions speak for us—they will advance their interests, not ours. And though the arts seem quite swift at generating their own institutions, these institutions can and often do work below or around the notice, and therefore the control, of more unwieldy ones such as governments. This is of course directly related to the arts' economic potential, or lack thereof. Poetry, for the same reason, often misses the attentions of even cultural institutions and is left to rely on individual incentive from which a very human-scale conversation can develop, a conversation based on the day-to-day living of actual and specific people, upon which any internationalism must be based.

The third point related to translation is that of a "third space"—a space not situated within either language, but suspended between them. This space is not a combination of the two languages or cultures in question, but is unique—a space in which cultural prescriptions are broken open and in which one can feel linguistic shifts occur that make apparent the degree to which the specificity of words and syntax construct (and limit) what is expressed. This space can therefore act as a zone of potential enlargement of either, but particularly the target, language.

And the fourth point deals with the spaces between words and that the delimiting quality of words constructs; yet this space itself holds no delimitations, but constitutes an immanent field of meaning that reigns as a relationship, not a static entity anchored to a determined sense. Translation makes these in-between spaces, which are out of reach of language, somewhat accessible and incites some of what language cannot say. Again, to quote from Ortega y Gasset: "one glimpses a possible marvelous aspect of the enterprise of translating: the revelation of the mutual secrets that people and epochs keep to themselves and which contribute so much to their separation and hostility; in short—an audacious integration of humanity."³—A statement which is of course ridiculously optimistic, but that nonetheless holds potential because it calls for the impossible.

¹ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Trans. C.K. Ogden. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1922.

²Ortega y Gasset, José. "The Misery and Splendor of Translation." *Theories of Translation*. Eds. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. 99.

³Ortega y Gasset, 104.

BILL TUTTLE

We would always pay perfect attention to the plenitude of what surrounds us everyday. The hoarse whispers that are written against the low winter sky bear down upon me. A heavy Buffalo January afternoon seems the predicate of an originary impulse to write about it. "I" would begin again. Here the end of one week spills into the beginning of the next. The local overflows with untranslatable voices conjugating uselessly.

"All right. The problem is that there is no new problem" (John Ashbery opens the third of his *Three Poems*, "The Recital"), as attention to the everyday is always suggesting a practice of writing. Would we aspire as writers to produce works of "genius"—Gertrude Stein describes "genius" as "being one who is one at one and at the same time telling and listening to anything or everything." Roland Barthes: "the writer (the friend) is [one] for whom speaking is immediately listening to [his/her] own language; thus is constituted a received language (though it be a created one), which is the very language of literature. Writing is, then, on every level, the language of others..." An act of attention to the everyday is fundamentally an act of turning to, of attending, others.

Yet so many others there are, past and present—so many voices of those who have been denied voice. George Hartley speaks of "unleashing the potential power of social objects which have been for us so long repressed, impressed into the service of one particular hegemonic paradigm." We must be attentive to the social and political echoes and accents that crowd the everyday. The economy of the everyday is characterized by excess—the language that we would receive (and into which we would be received) remains, ultimately, unrestricted. The potential fullness of received language, which is the language of the everyday attended to in its fullness, is forever haunted by the sometimes dissonant music of the past.

But on some days, like this one (now approaching dusk), how little there is, no new problem, "nothing new under the sun." How few ways there are to respond, when the poverty of what can be articulated seems the very function of the blank day that spreads downcast from my small window. However, my own struggle to articulate is decidedly *not* a result of my particular subjective state, nor does it indicate a fundamental poverty of this particular locale. The many voices are still singing in the wires that hang in heavy braids from trees and houses. Yet, over against the dense infestations of the everyday labor the faculties of articulation and combination and variation which originate in the sadly limited yet no doubt powerful palette of the generally subjective and the affective. Again, Roland Barthes: "initially this desire [to write] has at its disposal no more than a poor and platitudinous language; the affectivity which is at the heart of all literature includes only an absurdly restricted number of functions: *I desire, I suffer, I am angry, I contest, I love, I want to be loved, I am afraid to die*—out of this we must make an infinite literature." Furthermore, "We often hear it said that it is the task of art to *express the inexpressible* it is the contrary which must be said...the whole task of art is to *unexpress the expressible*, to kidnap from the world's language, which is the poor and powerful language of the passions, another speech, an exact speech."

This "exact speech" is precisely that literary act which no longer advertises its own affective insularity but rather communicates its essential "turning to others"—an act of language which calls attention to its own nature as being social, being *received*. Thus is the literary act the writer's "gift." And even though the writer "creates" nothing "new," cannot conjure something out of nothing, the *next* variation or combination is the one that will, for a time, offer a new "cast" or "sheen" to the floating, multitudinous fragments of the everyday. This line seems the climax of Ashbery's "Recital"; "The point was the synthesis of very simple elements in a new and strong, as opposed to old and weak, relation to one another."

Of course, the strong and new will decay into the old and weak after a time, this is inescapable, but the process renews itself and begins again. The process of synthesis and decay is inexhaustable. Furthermore, the process of generating new and strong relations makes available many new combinations, new

boundaries, new registers of interplay between perennially oppositional elements—object/subject, private/public, imaginative poverty/imaginative plenitude, masculine/feminine. And intimately bound up with these aesthetic possibilities are new possibilities for social practice. As the central and the peripheral, the hegemonic/institutional and culturally marginalized twist and slide in relation to one another, an even more fully developed, fully articulatable, fully audible everyday emerges—a new ground for social activity by a more inclusive social body. A larger conversation.

But there may be a time when some one of us finds the plenitude of the everyday alienating—a time when one attendant individual isolates him/herself from his/her own place within the network of received language. Thus, the confusion and pathos of the opening paragraph. “Affectivity is banal,” Barthes reminds us; the pathos of he who reads lonely whispers in the grey sky is banal and ultimately useless. We must counter this isolation by re-entering the given language of the given world, hearing it, varying it. Through this activity of language we pay attention to the plenitude of the everyday. We are listening and receiving. We are ever contracting and expanding.

I would propose a critical activity of the everyday. In its first order it is a method of negating those acts of self-isolation that a purely affective understanding of the “desire to write” leads to—the frustration that the poet faces when feels “so much I could write, so much I desire to write, but can’t get it down.” There must be a moment of re-entering language, of detaching ourselves from our subjective insularity and relocating us BACK INTO THE EVERYDAY. By way of new variations and combinations we would actively and self-consciously seek to take our private selves part way out of our selves—to make of ourselves our own periphery.

SUSAN WHEELER

I.

There are other forms for narrative, persuasion, declaration, pedagogy, description, explanation and division.

II.

Poetry—once extra-poetic purposes fall off—remains a heightened language, and acts as a stand-in, what Fairfield Porter called a fictive analogy, for grace, even and perhaps especially at its fiercest.

III.

The question is whose heightened language, whose grace.

IV.

A single, consistent voice is self-delusory. No discernible voice sidesteps the issue. The voice of the choice economist and the voice of the sometime-mechanic may parallel each other or coincide.

V.

Not so that one “sees several sides of an issue.” Rather, these cadences and English variants insinuate themselves, gloss each other, diverge in a way that makes the language necessary again. This is also a moral event.

VI.

And if this language successfully inserts itself into the reader then the grace necessarily follows, coming from the sense of something larger, something other, than the self, and transforms.

VII.

Some work does this by bracketing the voice presented (Pound, Stevens, Bishop often did—now, Trinidad, Myles, for two) and pointing toward alternatives through revealing its fallibility.

VIII.

Others—Graham, Berssenbrugge, Coleman, for three, now—

seem to use the devices of speculative philosophy to undermine its own conclusions of a knowable base, so all one is left with is the voice, making variant rings of observations and decisions.

IX.

Mom in Topeka knew she looked good when she'd come down-stairs and uncle Meldrum Diffenderfer would say, "You cut your lip?" Frankly, the seven o'clock version is terrifically boring. Randall stood outside the vitamin shop yelling, "Hey's got Tony."

X.

"...& I was trying to / spell out, using spaghetti (in sauce), several / sentences, which I had gotten right in my head & / was quite satisfied with, the first of which was / something like, This will be a personal version of / the history (& thus, harmless.)"
10/15/83, Alice Notley

XI.

There's the rub: the *harmless* of the doubted voice. The trick is to make the multiple Englishes pierce by way of their aggregation, and not in spite of it.

CHET WIENER

Currently it's about how not to have a productivity of the word managed like a voice when the just before is so many contingencies to float or push the rhythm, syntax, subjective, representational, repetitive, even analytical and moral risks. Each and every can be caught like a wave mined and culled, with and for interruption of parameters and developments that when touched or named silhouette incompleteness; where the inchoate mixes an oxymoronic war of eases or toos: much, much like, little, soon, explicit, late. A perpetual holding back becomes a proverbial letting go, the prescriptions of the in-motion elide and bear along the conditions, fearing having not educated glimmers of excess to foreground/background some later, some social, someone else...

KATIE YATES

POETICS BEFORE THE COMMON ("NEITHER HONEY NOR THE HONEY BEE")

a poem for no one a poem for what I haven't seen a poem for unlikeliness to

encode for waves to encumber

to be

this way:

once again (nostalgia)(american) depth who sketches branches full city

& I admit impediment or can't neutralize subjectivities yet mapping beyond the palimpsest & everything to consider + I know I sent you this quote this morning assuming feeling

a good meeting & most warming prospect for teaching another good thing—a black & white collage

yet my pretty serious commitment

we're making interesting steps [please sign the log book]

the logic of condition as anything on its own. I write about "influence."

Your poet friend & mendicant

K

in quest

as in speed of selanna run to offer/dark is the sea

if you could know

quietly

the touch of mirrors after the war

hasten

queen-to-be

"I awoke to an overcast sky" never sure how to get into an intellectual literary frame...so, "I feel myself an open system (woman) available to any words"

all entirely being in all of the examples

the sensibility to fall in the mud

to the whispers of pretense.

by

deep

winter

resistance

to bridges in many ways the graceful act of the artist to include:
—her neighborhood in dreams
—poem contained as if in a book but visually: landscape from
the hem of her meteor
—luminous details like proverbial (muthologos, not un-
Poundean)
—“and I wanted you as thief in the night”
mostly a life of mind, how they found out the world (The
Detention Center)
risks of temper (come recommended—sacro making “Prayer to
my lady of”

“Dapple-throned Aphrodite/eternal daughter of god”

the poem light quick somehow like a phone conversation—just
routine—exchange
ring & receive what you had forgotten, felt for (in a voice)
resassuring to those of us who follow the lineage:

The sin which I have been most careful to avoid is that
of spinning the fragment out “to make a poem.”

We are

so

hard

wrists full of aches

&

oak trees in our toes, now. I work visually as
well looking for signs in the canvas field “ta chair arosée de
l’envoi de mille oiseaux de paradis”

okay

into the chirasco

Play fair.

Convince me that you can’t

opposing the luxury of speech.

Sappho (trans. Mary Barnard & from her Footnote. Anne Waldman, “Iovis
Omnia Plena” & André Breton.

CONSTELLATION: READING AND REFIGURING

CHARLES BORKHUIS

CODES OF DESIRE

Toward A Post Surrealist-Textual Poetry

Turn an ear to overheard words and
HUMAN BEINGS
phrases as they pass through the
THE CONTEXT BRIGHTENS HERE
static via meditation or accident.
DO NOT INVENT THINGS
Dialing for psychic magnetism
ABORIGINAL SNOWMEN
in disjointed fragments—part
THAT ARE NOT THERE
static, part automatic dictation,
THE PREMISE TREATED
part misheard representation—
AS A TOURNIQUET
the found objects and processes
THERE IS ALWAYS HERE
of consciousness, marbled with
SHAPE-SHIFTING
lightning and ink. To write out of
AT THE KITCHEN SINK
this sense of *speaking in voices*
WORDS ALREADY IN THINGS
that changes psyche's channels and
EVERY SUBJECTIVE
is driven by lyrical bursts and
SHIP
interruptive dislocations. Desire, in
UNDER FINGERNAIL
its myriad forms and disguises, is
VISION
the face of protean change that
OR OBJECTIVE FACT
appears both foreign and familiar.
(T.V. VERSION ACCEPTABLE)
Sparked by far-reaching
SHARE THE MIRROR'S
associations and juxtapositions,
EYE

the words shift contexts rapidly,
FOR PLACE AND TIME
torquing around the inexplicable.

SETS OF OVERLAPPING WAVES

The dislocation is continuous but
HAVING OCCURRED SOMEWHERE
rhythmic—the moment to moment
PERCEIVED BY SOMEONE
oscillations and shifts in
MOMENT OF REVERSIBILITY
consciousness seen as the
SEPARATING AT THE JUNCTURES
primary theater of operations.

THE CONTEXT NARROWS

Meaning returns as echo:

(FICTIVE WALK)

reverie becomes self-reflexive,
RECORDED AS FELT
the dreamer awakens inside
THE SCREEN RIDES
his dream, the poet watches
ON THE SURFACE
himself writing from inside
HAND ON THE DOORKNOB

language...

TURNING

Words point to other words, not
TWO MOONS LEFT TO FIND
to *things in the world*.

INVENTION A DISGUISE

Not a world beyond
OPENING THE GRAVE
signification, but a world with
ONTO A GRAINY
given but changeable, cultural-
WOODEN SKY

linguistic codes, and a growing
ALREADY SEEN
awareness of no longer perceiving/

A PATINA OF WORDS
interacting with *the thing itself*
STUCK TO PEOPLE AND THINGS
but with *codes for the thing*
LANDSCAPES FALL BACK INTO

itself. When this nameless referent
LOWER-CASE LETTERS
is finally unavailable to us, the
REPLICANTS IN LANGUAGE
linguistic-body will become the site
CODES OF DESIRE
of poetic operations. Not the
DISEMBODIED TRACES
marvelous but the mechanisms of
IN THE ASHTRAYS
the marvelous in the exposed nerves
ON THE WALLS THE BARKING
and tissues of language—the place
DOG IN THE MIRROR
of slippage and paradox, where the
FACES THE AUDIENCE
real and imagined are finally formed
AND REMOVES HIS MASK
from the same stuff.
“WELCOME HOME”

LEE ANN BROWN

BUFFALO STANCE

or Paranoi-ya, Big Destroi-ya

My earliest influences for writing poetry seem to be hymns and nursery rhymes, later camp songs. I remember sitting at my grandmother, Obaa's desk and being fascinated by her teaching me to draw a cube so that it appeared three dimensional and to sing *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* in "big words."

Stintilight, Stintilight, O globular vivific,
Fain may I fathom thy nature's specific.

Loftily poised on either capacious,
Greatly resembles a gem carbonaceous.

Stintilight, Stintilight, O globular vivific,
Fain may I fathom thy nature's specific.

I was fascinated by the sound of the words and their mysterious translation into another dimension, another English, that apparently meant the same thing but sounded and felt completely different. This “making strange” of an everyday reality, to see a familiar rhyme anew was a powerful poetic act and influences my work today. Experimental approaches such as those suggested by Bernadette Mayer’s list of experiments generated with her St. Mark’s Poetry Project Workshop, Oulipian formulas, chance methods, or any poetry that recognizes a non-linear register of language are close kin to my grandmother’s games. Poetry functions in both the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic language realms.

Poetry is made of language.

Language is a real thing not an imitation. (Gertrude Stein)

I see language as a network of multiplicitous intersections: words that interlock and play by way of ‘music,’ (sound, rhythm, pitch, repetition, variation, inversion...), meaning, or ‘sense,’ (feeling), structure, pattern, along with many other elements, simultaneously and cumulatively, to form open systems which may be read in multiple ways. *Multiple* as in Luce Irigaray’s use of the word:

She experiences pleasure almost everywhere...one can say that the geography of her pleasure is more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle than is imagined—in an imaginary centered a bit too much on one and the same.

Multiplicitous “non-meaningful” levels of language must be taken into account in the writing and reading of a poem, not to the exclusion of, but at least as important as meaning. This multiplicity, which I believe is central to my poetic practice, exists at many levels: not only do I want to “do everything:” become fluent in many modes of poetic discourse and form, I want to evolve new structures and forms. If a language is defined as a vocabulary with a set of rules, I’d like to create a new language with every poem I write.

I want to comment on several tendencies which assert themselves in my writing practice. Now that I’ve said to do everything, I don’t want to lose Luce’s body language. I think the body, the way I think of a body, over and over. It’s not a set thing. Writing is a physical act. Often, I try to get my hands to keep up with my mind, which they can’t, and in that lag time my mind has passed through at least three different words or is changing the word halfway through the word to a different second half of the word so the next one is the one that is recorded.

A free play leaping of the mind. I believe in the polysexuality of the body and therefore of the mind. Your mind is a part of your body most definitely. ('First thought, Best thought' out the window. Either Ginsberg's mind is slow or he can type like a motherfucker.) I also want to say, Allen, you want to preach only clear 'minute particulars' to your students, and forget to give others the benefit of jumping from one word conclusion island to another as you so often do in your best work. "Stop Making Sense" is one logical reaction to this decade(nce) in which minute particulars appear in *Details Magazine*. But this new writing makes perfect senses.

And then there is the poetry that I write at the rate of one word a year. Incremental subway scribblings between jobs or classes that are eventually recognized as complete poems once the notebook is closed and opened many times. *No layoff from this condensery* (Lorine Niedecker). Working on a poem until every word fits and counts.

A little bit of what poetry is not. Poems are extra-narrative. That means going beyond narrative. Poetry does not have to be based in or even remotely related to narrative to "work." Poems are not for telling stories or recounting histories. They may have narrative elements, but to move me they're much more than that. Many times the narrative elements of poems are read into them by the reader: anytime we are presented with a string of words we tend to look for a story. What's important is to be able to construct multiple readings and to construct poems open to multiple readings. I'm tired of reactionary co-poets telling me that I'm dissing "straight" poetry with my attitude that everything interesting must be set in wild play. I see wild play in what I know of Sappho. The cut-ups of her occasional poems retain the "real thing" in each word, like a shattered hologram, due to her lyric art, not her confessional ability. Poetry is not just filling in a traditional form like so many of the "New Formalists" seem to be doing; if you use a traditional poetic form it needs to be reworked from the ground up, literally remade, as in Bernadette Mayer's *Sonnets* or Laura Moriarty's *Rondeaux*. And it's not just telling me your life's a metaphorical story. If you want to communicate, use the telephone. Or choose another art form.

I believe in the alteration
of planetary structure
by means of language
at every level of its register
from the phonemical to that of discourse,

and try to implement
a wide range of powers
and modes in my work.

I'm in favor of occasional poems
in the shapes of leaves.

I believe in both 'in a crowded bus'
and 'inner crawdad buzz.'

The cult of personality
is leaving me cold
as I approach the big 3-0
but I've slept with both Emily and Whitman
and feel no need
to choose one lover over the other.

This is a call to the arms of poetry and the expansion of its definition. American poetry today is experiencing the build up and melt down of generations comprising no single state of the art but, more than ever, a multiplicity of movements all happening simultaneously. Or according to Charles Bernstein, "an implicit refusal of unity that is a result of our prodigious and magnanimous outpouring of words. Poetry that insists on finding its own measure, charting worlds otherwise hidden or denied, or, perhaps best of all, never before existing." Sometimes you get mad at the state, father or power and want to write back like Xue Di did in China. Sometimes, like now in America, there's so much freedom to write that we think everything's allowed.

The sometimes silent but always deadly censors of money, family convention and state repress the ecstatic in art, music, theatre and literature, in an effort to control people through reinforcing "correct" behaviors and attitudes—eliminating possibility of popular unity through ecstatic abandon or public ritual. This is where I see the new/old mode of "spoken word" also coming into play, a place for a new popular poetry. I am especially interested in how languages of other mediums, song and film particularly, function poetically. But never forgetting the quiet page. We can be playfully chained in lyric's arms or play an Oulipo game for restraint, a little pleasure of resistance between the words.

I say again take advantage of all this, y'all. Get disciplined and focus on your own stuff but in all of these divine ecstasies

don't forget to look up what's out there in your neighborhood, on the other coast, and in the back row. Temporary Autonomous Zones are constantly forming and solidifying (dying). Don't rest on your baby laurels or pout and take the ball home. Play on.

ELIZABETH BURNS
AND CYNTHIA KIMBALL

*ASKING EACH OTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT
MAKING POEMS*

1. What do you think brought you to poetry in the first place?

CK: The rhythms of other people's words in my head, having them read to me, then reading them to myself. Saturated with the sound of language and then feeling my own words fall into rhythms. And trying to describe my rock collection when I was seven, trying to say how beautiful those rocks were.

EB: The fact that as a child I could hear sounds playing with each other. That I could hear stories and sounds. It became a way of being less lonely—listening and responding with poems and to poems.

2. Are there times when you felt that poetry "left" you or that you "left" it?

CK: I've been afraid here—in Buffalo, in graduate school—that somehow poetry would get squeezed out of me. "Grey" is only conducive to poetry when you spell it with an "e".

EB: When I was writing fiction. The fiction wasn't very good, but it was probably secretly helping my poetry by letting it rest.

3. FOR CK: Why are there so many trees in your poetry?

CK: Trees are my connection to the west, to the country that draws me back. They are the real inhabitants of the land. Near the lake in my hometown there's a certain Ponderosa

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Pine who's like a grandmother to me. She's been there forever, she's as tall as the sky, and it takes four people to hug her.

4. FOR EB: Okay, why is there so much water in yours?

EB: Maybe the same reason: where I come from? Maybe it's just such a great mover and undulater. It conduces change; it is change.

5. Do you think writing poetry is a political act?

CK: Yes, and if no one else ever reads what you've written, it still is.

EB: Working against silence is always a political act. And it's always a struggle for me.

6. Whom do you like to read to get you writing?

CK: Anybody whose words make my mouth feel full, who plays with sound. I rarely go to a specific writer for "triggering"—interesting language shows up everywhere. But specifically, I guess Hopkins, Plath, Annie Dillard's essays, William Goyen's fiction. Also certain rhythms get my words going, sometimes engine noises even.

EB: Sometimes reading anyone can get me writing. It's especially helpful for me right now to look at different forms or different languages: writing in Spanish, for example, after reading Lorca; writing in tercets after reading Sappho. Something that takes me far away from my surroundings in terms of form, so that I can come back to my surroundings. A ballad could do that, too.

7. When you read the work of your contemporaries, is there something you would like to see more of, less of, in their work?

CK: Less spectacular punctuation.

EB: I'm tired of reading absence-of-self work. So the post-modern subject is fragmented; that doesn't mean we have to insist on an annihilated fragment. That fragment still has parts of voices, desires. And I'm tired of an absence of

desire. If some sort of desire isn't taking the poet to the page in the first place, why should a reader be expected to engage in the desire to get to the bottom of the page? I think some poets forget that their audience wants to engage with them in some form or another; a reader doesn't just want to be impressed by erudition. We can go to philosophy or theology for that.

8. If you were to design a course of study for poets, what would you include?

CK: Reading—indiscriminate and self-indulgent reading. And walking. Getting the body out-of-doors where it can feel something, see something, be awed by something. Exposure to something completely beyond human control, like the Grand Canyon or a thunderstorm in the North Cascades. And the habit of carrying a pen and scraps of paper around on these excursions.

EB: Astronomy, but only a brief survey. Gothic architecture because the words are so great: Tympanum, Carolingian, Giselbertus, lintel. Elocution lessons: it's only fair that poets learn to read in front of an audience without swallowing words or reading too fast. Maybe it would help for people to read aloud more. I also think it would help communities of poets if they could learn to say hello to each other. Being a poet doesn't dismiss you from the realm of social interaction. Paper making and dye making would be good. Spanish, French, Italian and any of the classics. For the sound as well as the form.

9. Would you agree with the statement that all poetry is love poetry?

CK: Yes.

EB: Yes.

10. If so, why?

CK: Because I've suspected for a long time and now I'm fairly convinced that every noun in the world is "love" and every verb indicates movement toward or movement away from.

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EB: If not, why? If it's something other than love that brings you to this work—and I mean love in terms of love of expression, or love of articulation, or love of subject, or sound—then what are you practicing? What are you composing? A tract? I don't want to read a tract. I can admire the craft, perhaps, but I can't admire the motion.

11. What gets you writing these days? Other poets? Situations? Word play? Weather?

CK: Emotion intersecting with rhythm. Rhythms that are emotional. Intriguing and crunchy words.

EB: Questions, exaltation, relief, other languages, confusion.

12. What's your definition of "inspiration?"

CK: Accident and opportunity and hunger.

EB: Curiosity, a desire to go some place new.

13. FOR CK: You often have two voices in your poems—either as addressee from addresser, like apostrophe, or you have two voices speaking. What does this say about the communion or community of your voice(s)?

CK: “Communion” seems too powerful a word. Actually, so does “community.” “Commotion” is more like it—the way words in the head sort of scramble over each other, elbowing for the door or dragging each other along. I remember wondering if I would find my “voice” someday, but I’ve never developed much faith in that idea for myself. Maybe it’s something someone else will be able to see in my work before I do. Meanwhile, I am grateful each time to be taken over and trampled by whatever poem is on its way out.

14. FOR EB: Your poems often feel to me as if they were tracing a word's passage through a field of possibilities, and as a reader, I am pulled by this wordplay along trails of linked sounds and linked meanings...What does writing feel like when you're doing it?

EB: Sometimes like I'm following something or tracking

something, like there's something in the dark waiting to be pulled into light. Or like riding a current, with trepidation, of course. And having to hold tight sometimes, and trust the water.

STACY DORIS

Writing poetry is a way of living in the world in our time. It creates and takes time, it may show the forms of this time if we can ask of it from within and with humor, so as to be active in the answerings. What are the sensitive issues of our time, and how does poetry participate? Gertrude Stein once said "The only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends on how everybody is doing everything...no one is ahead of his time." Just before that she said that artists, like wars, "usually are prepared just as the world round them is preparing." How is what is seen different now; how does that change the possibilities of making; how is the meaning of "prepared" crucial nowadays? Gertrude Stein very smartly examined her time, the art and science and societies going on, and thus equipped herself to write in ways that played with and advanced it. In her era, photography and psychology and physics and many other factors inter-related in order to develop and form the time, and Gertrude Stein concerned herself with all these things to situate herself in the present of and for her writing.

At that time, artists and scientists and thinkers of all sorts were tremendously involved with objects. They first needed to create objects that expressed and achieved their discoveries, and then invent ways of undoing those objects, partly because reversability and relativity were of great importance in their world. They usually worked in terms of the making of objects and the temporality—specific and general—of the making. The spatial concerns of their made objects are often uniquely temporal: they exist materially but do not represent or too much describe space. They are emphatically concrete however, highly inventive but often eschewing the non-spatiality of the imaginary.

Now, times have changed. Information and its diffusion, computer and media technologies, "chaos" physics, politics, nations and what that means, etc., have changed everything in recent years, are a product of changes, and characteristically keep changing like crazy. At least two broad ways this makes

the conditions for writing poetry very different seem to me clear and worth mentioning. First, I think we need to be prepared in new ways, perhaps prepare ourselves more overtly and carefully while somehow more than ever staying in time; writing in time and in our time partly because the space in which we make our “objects” is less and less viably physical. This is the other issue of importance: I think objects and their primary attributes, including certain kinds of memory, are on the wane in the technological dominion of our era. We could resist this tendency, we could fight to keep our space physical, but that seems a less interesting alternative because it is ultimately reactionary. Now, I dislike video and computers and those complexly unmoving scientifically generated images, but I want my work to be part of our time which they are constituting. I think that poetry can be vital in this contemporary context within which it must create, if poets make the added efforts it takes to be aware and active at present. In our time, preparation becomes dynamic because there is so much going on with so little physical visibility that we need to pursue it in order to perceive it. I think we poets have an increased responsibility to ready ourselves and that we can also do this as a community. It seems crucial not to just inform ourselves about cultural and scientific developments without entering them through our poetry writing. I don’t know of any scientific developments which have gained credence without reaffirming and legitimizing cultural trends: science is funded to ultimately represent the social structure, while for poetry such pressure is slight. “Chaos” theories can’t resist defining order in the end, and perhaps all artless description narrates and constructs order at large. For me, poetry differs there if we encourage it to.

Personally, I’m excited by objectlessness, and by trying to start writing at a point beyond abstraction. This is a possibility unique to our time when the project of culture in general moves away from a concern with setting up and manipulating physical objects. Yes, power and wealth and ownership are at least as important as ever, but in increasingly invisible, insidious ways that seem to me less and less analyzable through things and representation.

Generations are made in common to a large extent, and everyone active contributes variously at different points within the time frame. For a long while, I’ve been very concerned with issues of meaning and latencies within language; in particular within words. In my work at present, I use words as my point of departure. Keeping away from their representational uses, I try

to make and express their invisible links with other words, word parts, and underlying significance. Once I get within that realm, I also let whatever happen, and the imaginary enters into what the meanings become. A lot of social resonances come through, but that is not my intention. Sense becomes an operative tension in this work, not an end. What there was of meaning, operative in the writing process, later vanishes even for me, so there is a doubled remove which I know relates to how the world is working. I think our present climate of uncontrollably proliferating information and artificial intelligence is making memory obsolete or at least quite optional, and this already has and continues to set poetry free and adrift; it seems best to work more with than against the tendencies that poses. What I make is definitely composed and works viscerally with language I think, but would you say language has real viscera? Also it goes awry; it does not hold together as a thing.

DEANNA FERGUSON

POETICA. THAT DOTH REIGN AND LIVE WITHIN MY THOUGHT

Vertigo lined up lingual, meant ground axed rival. I crawl into the discarded fridge and close the door. End of to end all, the long instruction ignoble bloody and butterscotch. Another couldhood cussed per suasion. If the Fiberglass fits...cavalier, galoot.

Mother father sis years clucking “extreme situations”. What a beautiful smell, net content like. Pregnancy less pre-disturbed. Drinking process my calm downed. Strapped on her own my. Center they want. Didn’t want me. Operatic snot. Done being sexy.

Little postcard, dry wet spot, cum punctum.

Victimage sacred amorous whose vehicle is rhetorical. Theoretically my long weak knees, oh current hymen. Jug jug. Those are the pee-holes that were his eyes. These words tumble out, suddenly, in parenthesis, a voice from someone else, those are the pee-holes that were his eyes. She do the men in different voices.

Pediment left in receding perfume. Bum’s rush to meet skin, formal alluvial thought coursing through. Pen’s insulin by an insolent hand. Spleen through a screen’s fan hit. Memory’s

seine gathered and draggered. Kept close to the breast as if with its own sweet breath.

Is that your crew? No my cargo. Stupid by smothered by. Culture indeed. Its own perverse thing. If bodies ricochet, may least to name or bray. I Kant In My Pants With A Glove On.

Something's seething in the kitchen. Ritual reflex disgorge ejecta switched. Forget it, you can't be my cowboy. Straddle this saddle or hobble for dances Speaking beings. Speaking being.

ROBERT FITTERMAN

LINE/AGE

—it's not so much which side of the line where you stand, but where *is* the line and where is it going/from here:

by line I mean tradition I mean the line—aligned to.

For better or worse.

I don't necessarily meet L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetics in its most pedagogical territory, but, instead, in an overlapped territory rich with pushing language to new and compelling parameters—inventing and re-inventing new forms.

—not so much to enforce a theoretical position, but for the need to invent a musicality particular to the post-Vietnam ear/era. This invention, this attention to

language and redefining its limits is very much in the tradition of a particular experimental brand of Modernism—the concerns of Stein, Williams, Zukofsky, etc., ultimately led to similar inventions—

and if the invention is in the form in the music then the way in is thru the language there's something

in the *making* of the poem—the choices the poet makes—which line-up with a tradition. It can

be traced in the language—line?—itself. Which poets have inherited the work of Dickinson, Pound, Zukofsky, Niedecker, Duncan, Creeley? Which poets *sound* or even *look* like those poets? Which poets have respected or employed those inventions and then gone on?

The break from formal metrical music/structure has placed the responsibility on the line and/or new structure to create “a kind of music.” The attention to the line—whether it be fragmented like Friedlander’s or hyper-fluid like Silliman’s “new

sentence"—is the place where the music aligns itself with tradition.

In America, this (dis) alignment, this break from metrical European forms, resonates more deeply. *I.e.* as a break-away nation its no accident

that we have a strong tradition in breaking traditional European forms and re-inventing our own. Both Dickinson and Whitman broke away from England's tradition because they required a language that couldn't be found there—in Dickinson this new line occurs in a broken form of that conventional European structure.

This same break continues to advance the poem by re-negotiating and/or tearing down the boundaries set up by new conventions.

It is in this re-negotiated territory—on these grounds—where Bruce Andrews' work meets Eigner's or Diane Ward's work meets Dickinson's or Jessica Grim to Stein.

Sharon Olds, who claims to be influenced by George Oppen and might identify with the emotional content of his work, doesn't seem to be in his line or his tradition. What Oppen does with enjambment, what he communicates thru the subtlety of the line-breaks and spacing, is rarely seen in mainstream poetry. Similarly, I can think of no examples of mainstream poets who consistently use the shorter line. Why is that? Because a poet has to align him/herself with a particular tradition to do so. An alignment easily seen in the poems of Grenier, Equi, K. Robinson, Reed & a host of other "short-line users."

It's in this line that I hear L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writing—in this result perhaps more than the process—where

it breaks new ground, where it stretches or cracks the boundaries of language—where there's new music— —

but does the poem have to be good enough to be new? Is "good" a good question? What makes one L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poem better than another one?

The problem comes up in Bernstein's essay, "State Of The Art" (*A Poetics*). He states: "What interests me is a poetry and a poetics that do not edit out as much a edit in...As if poetry were a craft that there is a right way or wrong way to do: in which case, I prefer the wrong—anything better than the well-wrought epiphany of predictable measure." Of course, I too, would prefer almost anything to that description of the "workshop" sort of poem, but why is the "right way or wrong way" restricted to mainstream poetry? Yes, the permissiveness of

experimentation should not be undermined, but the poet should have some sense of better or worse in some tradition. The “crafted” poem does not belong in world, exclusively, of the gentile art. Any page of Zukofsky’s *A* seems far more realized or musically put together than any poem I’ve read by Richard Wilbur.

It’s not as simple as a right way or wrong way, but I do think the poems need to be “made”—specific preferences, tastes, ear, govern the choices—otherwise why would a book of Bernstein’s work be more interesting than a book of listings from the White Pages? I would offer, instead, that the poet has a responsibility to putting the language or music in motion—forward somehow. That the “craft” is in the attention to language, to the music, and to the re-invention of structures which can embody such music. I agree, fuck the “epiphany of predictable measure,” but not all attention to the poem’s making leads down that path.

I’m not buying into a “make it new” program as much as a “make it good” and where the two meet, and where the tradition is that has shared those concerns. Experimental writing of the past 15 years, particularly L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writing and its environs, has made a significant contribution in pushing language forward, in discovering new structures and musicalities to keep language alive, on edge, and re-opened for/to new questions.

FORREST GANDER

ROGUE WAVE

...but I was more declamatory in my twenties.

I majored in geology. I spent four years learning to recognize crystal forms, using an x-ray diffractor to make structural maps of minerals, tracing the archaic mammalian radiation, cracking open black shales to study graptolites so compacted they were hardly more distinguishable than pencil marks and I was careful not to inhale them.

Sometimes I begin poems with a structural penchant, but unlike the Oulipoceans, whom I admire, my architecture deforms according to what it comes to contain. A long poem, *The Faculty for Hearing the Silence of Jesus*, started as mimetic enthusiasm for a rhetorical motif in a section of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, but in the final version of my poem, no approximation of the original pattern remains. Overriding musical and semantic concerns

transformed the poem. “Feel pattern, be wed” goes the gnomic verse that guides me, and so I do.

Whether form or cadence triggers the poems, measure always conducts my composition. Writing, I pass from time to space, from succession to juxtaposition. I write the poem in all directions at once, emphasizing not the stability of single words but the transition that emanates between them, or between it and its rings of association, rings of silence. My idea of meaning derives from the continuity of the transition, which is, for me, erotic.

I was raised by women and among women; we communicated in a way that rendered men’s minds—when later I came to think I knew them—strange to me. Maybe this has more to do with my family than with gender, though gestation and birth are metaphors I continuously associate with writing. I have always believed my body is involved in my thinking as a locus and means of perception and its arousal, that pen and paper transform the hand into the mind. My poetics may principally be concerned with opening myself to language, resolving for its disclosure. But “myself” is a miracle mediated by political consciousness and desires which necessarily influence the way the energy, as Rosmarie Waldrop says, “runs to words.”

What I want is simple enough: to combine spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and technical elements into a resistant musical form. To summon the social and political meanings of sound and rhythm as well as meanings whose truths lie beneath or above our syntax. And for it to have the force of implication. As Thelonius Monk put it more succinctly: “Just how to use notes differently. That’s it.”

Among other poetries, I am interested in such as register a moral impulse by means of tone, one enlarged by awe or humility. And I follow those poems whose rhythms draw me away from a sense of familiarity, away from the illusion of security. So I am excited by a younger wave of rogueish poets, poets at variance such as Pam Rehm, Karen Kelley and LeAnn Jacobs, for whom I feel a particular affinity of means and spirit. Informed, in part, by their respective excellences, I come unto my page.

I will add that I think the act of writing poetry is motivated by some faith in the possible goodness of words, which is to say, though it sound naive, by love.

GEOFFREY JACQUES

A LETTER ON POETICS:

Lyric meditation, ruminative autobiography, fleeting perception, wanton, voracious desire, dreams, memories, lies: these are some of the elements that make up the poems I write. I'm less interested in formal considerations than I am in accomplishing the task of recording my thought patterns and their interplay with my feelings. For this reason, I resist narrative and sequentiality, which are better served by other forms like fiction and non-fiction stories. I don't resist the urge to be sentimental, romantic, rhapsodic, erotic, angry, blue or puzzled. This is the world as I've found it, and talking to and about the world ("the world?" often it's just some giddy other voice) is what writing poetry is about for me.

Growing up in Detroit during the 1950s, 60s and 70s has made me particularly sensitive to the effect on our senses of today's post-industrial, urban environment. The kinetic character of perception, the knowledge that everyone and everything is disposable but that the "disposable" parts never disappear; the permanence of rubble in our peripheral vision; the flora and fauna in this environment and the gradations of light, color and shadow in the air, on our bodies and on buildings all find their way into my meditations sooner or later.

But sensory perception is only a window, behind which lay the mysteries: love, with its ecstasies and lies; war with its lies and lies; continual outrage against murder, tribalism, indifference and organized greed; the continual joy of music, of piquant odors, of play, of orgasmic communion, of my lover's warm, moist, fragrant, satiated flesh curled against mine are some of the ordinary human activities I'm still unable to fully understand. And my verse is, in a sense, my way of coping with the unfathomable puzzles posed by these events. I believe others, just as puzzled as I am, appreciate hearing another voice seeking—not answers exactly—but witness, to this extraordinary (and almost banally ordinary) journey.

Extraordinary or ordinary? I'm unable to make up my mind because the journey is both. And though its events—its beginning and end—are the same for everyone, this marvelous language and wondrous imagination we are given allows us to reveal and realize the marvelous in a minute, in the receding shadow.

"Poetry," says Carl Sandburg, "is a sliver of the moon lost in

the belly of a golden frog." Has any one of us said it better? For me, the immediacy this sentiment implies, and the immediacy of our received world in this portable, digital century, is the connection I strive for when writing verse. I hope I (at least sometimes) succeed.

ADEENA KARASICK

Because the facade is cut into :the surface suffused in locus recesses i am the image of my memory. Between synonymy/homonymy, ignonimy, anonymity: a liminal anomoly. An anomie. Am mimosa. A metamorph. An amourphous morphology i'm a moment or second to myself. A historical image that becomes. A paracritical passage. And as ellipsis eclipse in the lapsus—a repast of a past postulates as a resonant present sends espaced en an irrepressible present/as the wonder of appearance experiences as possibility, re-poised as pause/posit/post. Se posed in a languerous re-pose.

So in a complex of codes i carry myself into a palimpsestic historicity which is heresy. A heresy. Retiled in a telling, a toiling, a taling, seeing and essaying suspecting and scandalously violating a perpetual present presentiented in frictions. As fractions of fact infects fiction as a complex flex of conflictual flax for facts in flux is always infact fiction. So, retold there's a friction in the fiction as projection into as the fiction makes me re[e]l!

"C'mon, get real" i am a memorializing memory an imminent amniosis which is never pure. As forgetting begotten forgetting forgets. forges in a forgetful excess. folds over in memory murmers (as more ages merge) a memorexile as i re-member to forget before memory and forgetting

it in meme embers

[As re created his name out of his members]
my history is an ideolog[it(im)]ization which i invent and reinvent as I demobilized shift into. A polyvalent multilingual activity which speaks to an every changing historical moment.

I'm a "sign of the times"
(and take my time.)

So when "it's all in the timing" it's about time—tempered 'down time' (in a topological time)-not timeless, but a temporal d(rift—beyond framed by the "no longer and not yet" [Lyotard], by the "not there yet and always ready" [Derrida] of a

tempestuous gesture.

[i used to be a temporary sequitor]

So, in contaminated time, how can i return to an ever shifting context. In flux, becoming, i am the image of my image:the (n)e(u)rotic rotting. wrought. writ(h)ing the body [corps] body [text]. For when the beyond of the body is the body, i'm a synecdochic diectic where dis[sic]ecrit dis-eased in metalepsis, degenerescence, dehiscences, abscesses—displaced in an axiomatic excess, diexis in excess annexes the syntax enacts in parataxis.

But with every look i take from. you. steal away in images. Re-present you in an appropriative process. As a premise a promise pro-mises i am tied to you propelled by impropriety. Palimpsesticized in erasure and substitution. Because you are the miracle of me. And as an instance solicits i steal into/elicit systems dissolved in eleasticity lists—last lasts lost in list sills—swells into a history of images: as a mirage merges where you always already are in excess (i'nexus of) borders blur boundaries overflow into all that is fluid en fluxus flooding in vertiginous vortices spiralling in interstitial surfaces re-produced as a plaint supplies re-(ap)plied in this supple place spliced per space splayed out in “a quantity of connection” that claim me [noun and name me] in vertebra, abjectives.

drenched in your image re-membered in indeterminate endurance as meme memes me in mimesis when i am [meme myself 'nthememe] when i am [only a memes to an end] And i can't sememe in myself because i am simulacric. A memetic mutation. (in the memetime)

meme i me my maybe

So, even if i seem same it's only “effects” of the same. Like, you are not identical but eidedical. Deictical. A profusion of differences, appearances that play in a locality (which is) an interlocuted linkage. When locus allocated in likeness.

i am always virtual. “a la mode” (on the side) in the mode of. modelled on [as my mind is a made place] what is “mine” is in the manner of (mod.). en vogue. vague—I'm inexact. A textatic act—potentially metaphorical—As if. As if i was s(if)tting through these letters. As if you could hear me now. As if i was i. As if i could possess my own thought. Process my []. As if it was mine. as this moment p(r)oses for you. As i write the local, immediate, concrete re-created in my{t[h[i]{s}tory]} (yr [i]'s

now) threshold me. When i am never i/am always as you. Like it. Naked before you. in a struggle of silences on silence in disappearance when beyond the veil or under the veil is to look at the veil revile when the truth shall make you veiled “veil [as if] /the veil” of unknowing. valency exists. When everything is veil (veil smear) valor or an unveiling unavailable veiling [it avails/not] violating in evol volumes.

DAMON KRUKOWSKI

SOME KNOWLEDGE (1000 WORDS)

Shall I now speak something of my sentiments concerning poesy? It must be confessed or supposed at least, that there are seasons when it is hard to suppress the exuberant flow of lofty sentiments. But when a subject is proposed to your thoughts, consider whether it be knowable at all, or no; and then whether it be not above the reach of your inquiry; and consider again whether the matter be worthy of your inquiry at all; and then how far (according to age, station, capacity, your chief design and end).

Query, *cui bono*? The glory of God? Little tricks and deceits, by sliding in or leaving out such words as change the situation should be abandoned and renounced by all honest searchers after truth. To what purpose? For your own advantage? Is it not enough

to determine the truth, or to forbid any proposition in the title “axiom”—? What may be enough is just indifference. A warm zeal ought never be employed. I believe there is a God, and that obedience is due to him from every reasonable creature; this I am most fully assured of, because I have the strongest evidence. since it is the plain dictate both of reason and of revelation. Some effects are found out by their causes, and some causes by their effects.

Yet I would lay down this caution: no man is obliged to learn and know everything; yet all persons are under some obligation.

— — — —

What are the fundamental qualities, divisions, materials of

literature? What would an abstract literature be?

Cage says he was misled at first into thinking that the ultimate distinction in music is sound/silence; but what turned out was that there was no silence, only intended sound/unintended sound. Can we think of literature in an analogous way? At first we could say that the fundamental distinction is meaning/non-sense, which would then resolve more sensibly to intended meaning/unintended meaning. But is meaning as fundamental an idea as sound?

Writing based on sound as the smallest unit of literature, *i.e.*, Ball, Schwitters, Marinetti, etc. doesn't convince me that sound is primary. Literature is made up of something else. Words, obviously....But think of sound/silence: that distinction is more abstract than note, pitch, frequency, etc. Cage generalized from the entire experience of music to find it. The experience of literature is reading (not listening—which might have led to these poets' faith in sound). What is reading like? Dreaming; thinking; dream-work; unconscious thinking. It is internal, partly visual, completely imagined.

Back to intended meaning/unintended meaning. This is familiar from dreams. And its tools would also be from dreams: repetition, condensation, substitution, etc. Here we could probably reconstruct rhetoric, perhaps as a special case—or perhaps as the universal.

Meaning: it isn't concrete like sound, form, line, color. But is it the atom of language? Is it at the root of all parts of speech? The dictionary, of course, is a list of meanings, and manages to account for every word. Is there any other way to account for every word? And if not, can we retreat past meaning? Could something account for every meaning?

If meaning is the basic unit of literature I wonder if the lengths to which Cage goes for indeterminacy are in fact built into the art by the indeterminacy of meaning; by the assigning of meaning by forces outside the ego. That is, the ego cannot fix the meaning even if it fixes the choice of word.

But what is the purpose of indeterminacy? In Cage's view, indeterminacy eliminates certain Western habits which interfere in the experience of an object (by introducing a subject). Sound, free from conscious choice, can then be heard as sound.

Indeterminacy in literature would therefore be the

experience of meaning free from the mind's imposition of relationships, associations, etc. But doesn't meaning itself preclude this possibility, in its purest sense at least? If word were the basic unit, free of meaning, then we would be on a par with sound and this system would make sense. But meaning *is* category, history, psychology, etc., attached to a word. Words chosen by chance will be, as Cage intends, each a word, on its own; but words, unlike sounds, carry association (meaning) on their own, not just in relationship to one another. (Two objections: sounds to a person with perfect pitch, and words to a person with no knowledge of the language in which they are spoken—two points on the continuum between music and literature?)

Meaning is, by identity, a series of dualities the likes of which Cage sought to eliminate. There can be no eliminating its own identity, through chance or otherwise. Rhetoric is on the other hand easily eliminated by the random choice of words.

Why am I not hostile to rhetoric?

Joyce, Stein, etc., were looking to disrupt rhetoric for what—more meaning, less meaning, a different way of meaning....But rhetoric is the structure of meaning, or at least the description of the methods of meaning. It is not prescriptive, but analytical. We cannot speak a-rhetorically, although we can speak with or contrary to accepted patterns of rhetoric.

Here we might discover the problems in automatic writing.

Think how connected Joyce and Stein really are to rhetoric. Could you explode the concept, expand its possibilities until there's nothing left that isn't rhetoric? Isn't that what Stein was really doing? (Can you invent a trope? Or just use it where it hasn't been used before?) Again an analogy to Cage: maybe what he did wasn't ignoring harmony, or doing away with it; but making the distinction between harmony and disharmony meaningless, doing away with *discord*. He said his definitions were meant to exclude the minimum. Rhetoric could be expanded the same way. This could serve as a description of the avant-garde's project as a whole: the expansion of rhetoric to incorporate nonsense; the end of nonsense; the end of sense.

*THE WRITING NOT YET WRITTEN
(IN THREE SECTIONS)*

(the following as the closing lines of the chapters and including the footnotes to the following)

Footnotes

¹many things are writing and the things I wanted to write: as a door flashing before, as a sewing machine secures a sheet, as a batter strikes out and a box of matches falls from the ledge on the window.

²I cut things out a Sears catalog and paste them to the steering wheel. They mark the limits to the flustered recitation: a fake fur coat dyed to look like sable, a 12HP riding lawn mower, a 12x12x8 ribbed aluminum shed. They are walking and standing up in the showroom. The shadows are stamped to the year 1983 or 1978. The earliest pictures appear like rainwater in a forest or the graded pane on a deep sea tanker. The key glides toward an ignition. The wrapping cries out on deck. There is some pain and nearby but not a lot. The carpet stammers fur. A cat cries to be let out in the car and more pages turn. Now it is time to promise something like an incision. I am a number shaped like a loop or sky dive in the chest. A fire is lit and the heart retrieves the sawed off butt of a hammer. They are sitting and talking and drinking beer in the front of the junked car when the catalog becomes afraid and starts to rustle helplessly in the trunk. This is one of the reasons they talk each other in and out of the car. He or she, to throw a doughnut into the rolling brush. What is the sky but the acetylene or the fruits that things are brushed against or peered carelessly in. Out of nowhere 9 numbers appear on the windshield. They are in the car and the car is moving backwards and sideways like photographs of them. He turns to her, then she, him, she spins the radio dial. They are now the part of the hour making up time.

A tourist with a camera enters the scene on a boat or freeway. Dar es Salaam is 3:30 in the morning. It is a dark place

and quiet. The boat in the brochure said it would take the to the quiet. A trough fills an hour.

Here. Here in Malindi they were certain they would find a boat. The guide was wearing a white robe. His name was Omar. They were on their way to Zanzibar. It was the purported year of their honeymoon. They are all merging. A margin appears in a bedstand. And then a part of the second hour making up time.

Next or next time a story was told, a ring was tossed. Weather was predicted. The perfected trees blew backwards into the rain.

The time before they arrive at their destination, they are sitting forwards and the car is on the road travelling sideways.

They are sitting forwards leaning into the frame, the figures on backwards.

Against their fingers, the forwards go on, in the car, as in travelling by, he or she says.

Now everything goes sideways in a car and grace going forwards, sequence and repetition.

She leans over and lashes his seat belt and he feels like a plastic deck chair, the contoured dash, a simulation of a crash or a scene of lying. It starts raining long grey jets down the windshield. Now it is clear there are 36 numbers and she must cover the table with all of them. She starts a story about Florida and how her aunt sells old lace and underwear. They wake up and she has done nothing ordinary. She smokes a pack of Camels but he wants to forgive her. They talk about a honeymoon in Zanzibar and she is an excellent sailor. The windshield wipers are not working. Every 30 seconds she turns a round silver dial to F, and the wipers swaddle across. It is the same when they make it across the road before a reststop. Between the wipers, a boy and a girl begin to look like a man and a woman at the side of the road. There is a rattle and a baby crying toward it. She heard something at the hotel this morning or looking at the boy who was looking under the red hood at the gas station. The road is flat like starlight and he does not take his hand off the steering wheel. While driving she reaches over to put her hand on his neck and he looks back like a book the detective novelist has begun reading. What is writing: this is how they look when they touch. What is seeing: the rear view mirror swears and turns to a sheet. What is touching: when they touch, everything

is recent, like him staring into the windshield, like a form letter she received from the agency that week, like the way someone stands up in the waiting room because they need a drink of water. Now the break scores the story. Now the billiard ball reaches its appointment. Or Now the story or the steering wheel holds up the billboards they are reciting to each other as they pass. The balls have the same velocity or a series of ripples in the macadam that made her want to lash him to the spinning wheel. She took the wheel for him and he slipped out of the seat belt. They do not stop driving until they arrive in Tucson where his brother has two twin girls. Their names are Charice and Kelly. They appear once across the rainy windshield and then disappear like mockingbirds and cleaning rags. What is a year except the dial's pastoral. A girl had turned seven before they learned how to use the telephone to call him Uncle Steve. A telephone rang in the hotel room window. A rope was secured to the steering wheel. She felt him coming into her and every move he made was her neck jerking back. Where were her eyes? Now they were all going to change places while the car was doing over seventy. She kissed and he closed his eyes. He took his foot off the gas (as if it were sewn there) and there was a moment of weightlessness (as if matches were speeding off a ledge) which he confused with wishfulness before she put her foot down. The car sped off. She was pregnant. And later this evening as he stepped away from the car to open the door, he thought about the princess walking onto the chalky presidio, the rockets soaring, the wires jammed to his head to make him see stars, right here in the Kingdom of Thrones, and Kings on their Seven Milky Beds. There was something distant about it. But everything she told him was recent, like a dish of peas, like a lucky surf cast, like its plain opposite.

³Now Duly sworn to its Silence: Whiteness or Currently a Witness. The caffeine in a cup of coffee. The body leaving its body.

⁴The Softness was blunted. It sent the blood out gradually like a television set viewed from less than two feet. It is black in the car so I take off the watch. I open the book of Departures and the pages turn black. I row the car to its gutter and paint it with lipstick. The announcer gives me the speech, the scroll or its score on the rudderless screen. The car enters the left lung. The

high beams swim out. I look around at the silence in the grass and she scrapes along on the inside, like a swearing glass.

⁵ Calling backwards: a radius of ice, a rendering of a race, a space or a species recently ended where the sentence goes under.

⁶ I know enough Russian and I pick up the pieces. I flower the cheek and cram through the gloves. In the Department of the Department of Estuaries, I touch her dials and gauges. The sky is waiting for gas. I see the hand tear itself from a cheek. The last letters go in with the ink. A blotter unwinds. The blonde dial scatters and goes up with stars.

⁷ Eyes Cradled in smoke: a card and its King turns up like a Shell. A hand letting me down like applause. I see the pen scrawl out its circle. The Premium aims for its Heaven. The scalpels go in like he's fishing.

^{4b} I was staring at the waitress dancing. I fish with the line of a mapmaker. In my opening chest under the knives I drive the road to the edge of a lake. In my cavity I look in and see my heart. I say: Here is her heart and here is her metaphor.

⁸ The stitches go round in the wound. Eight or more Fences in mend: seven tears roll over. On the edge of the world I slash five or more fences with pliers. I feed myself water. There are sacks in my eyes. The electricity fades off or it flickers.

⁹ My God waits Patiently, dates on the calendar turn to roses in the window. They make me see stars. (*op. cit.*)

¹⁰ Stages or staves, I open the envelopes and think of their kindness.

¹¹ The Witness to the two car crash reads off the articles in the morning paper and sees the trees, the shirts hanging, the woman passing through the glass next to the man.

A TEXT:

Drapery. It was normal. Room 107. Evening clouds. They were beginning to form across the plains. He touched her like a list. She was listening to the air going past his lips like the shuffling of a deck of cards. The maintenance crew polished the instruments. Rules formulate the better. The perfume drifts the passing lane. R meant to correct the curve of its arrogance, the swerve of a road coming on cue. Everything was a misunderstanding. Something was temporary. Perfume appeared in a costume. They rolled and folded the two of them: arm in arm, likeness in likeness.

STEPHEN-PAUL MARTIN

SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

When Bill Clinton was elected president, several columnists in *The New York Times* urged their readers to be optimistic, to set aside whatever contempt they might have been feeling about the ethical integrity of the American political process. I personally felt relieved that the Republicans would no longer be calling the shots, but I saw no reason to put much stock in Clinton's "town called Hope" rhetoric, and I was annoyed by the arguments of *Times* columnist Garry Willis, who claimed that mainstream U.S. politics "must not be so much reinvented as relegitimized."

This is precisely the kind of seductive nonsense that regularly gets produced by our nation's mass communication system and tends to dominate public opinion. The fact is that U.S. political activity has never been legitimate, so the term "relegitimize" can only be read as a code word for "remystify." The idea that the White House should be remystified is frightening. Yet many of the media images focused on the new administration have visually suggested that Clinton is a man around whom confidence in the one-party system might be reconstructed.

Any reconstruction of this nature would be damaging in the extreme. What is called for instead is a continued focus on the means by which pictures and words are used to construct public and private awareness. Since we are not going to get this kind of

analysis from the media, we will have to generate it ourselves, through a variety of discursive and aesthetic means. In a social environment that is increasingly manufactured through the coercive initiatives of those who own the means of image production, there is an increased need for alternative networks in which a different (more skeptical, more demanding, more interactive) approach to communication is emphasized.

It is in the context of these alternative networks that innovative poetry and prose become most useful. By encouraging a state of awareness in which verbal and visual signs are viewed not as objects of consumption but as opportunities for critical negotiation, experimental writings of various kinds ask us to cultivate habits of perception that make us less susceptible to the invasive motions of mainstream consumer culture. At the same time, such texts invite us to view Hollywood and Madison Avenue as sources of raw material, signifying systems whose elements can be appropriated and routed against themselves. Far from leading us to "suspend disbelief," this kind of writing insists on a radical skepticism, a re-examination of the connections between words, images and our physical senses.

Of course, the danger involved in this skeptical approach is that by defining aesthetic activity in purely critical terms, we reduce it to a merely reactive process, something which sustains itself only by remaining in dialogue with the very thing it critiques. While such a dialogue may seem desirable and even unavoidable, it can also become rather tiresome. Functioning more as an element of a poetic doctrine than as agents of subversion, the ironies that allow us to distance ourselves from commodity fetishism become a predictable set of literary strategies that can easily be appropriated by universities, in graduate seminar rooms where "radical" tenured professors turn what were once challenging perspectives or techniques into academic commodities. This was certainly the fate of the experimental writing that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century, and a similar operation is now being performed on innovative writers who came of age in the seventies and eighties. Whether a writer is appropriated by the Scylla of mainstream culture or the Charybdis of academic culture, the result is the same—the work itself loses its radical valence, no longer serving a disruptive function.

A certain amount of appropriation is probably unavoidable.

But its damaging effects can be minimized if we can sustain an awareness of the context in which a work is produced and from which its significance is ultimately derived. None of my own work, for example, has been produced in the kind of apolitical vacuum typically associated by the academies with “serious literature.” Rather, it has developed in connection with three separate but at times interconnecting networks centered around the Segue Foundation in New York City, the Fiction Collective in Boulder, Colorado, and the visual writing/mail art scene associated with magazines like *Factsheet Five*, *Retrofuturism*, *Score*, *MaLLife*, *Generator* and *Xeroxial Endarchy*. Interacting with writers and publishers connected with these groups, I have found what I think any serious writer needs to produce meaningful work—readers whose values I understand and respect, and whose reading techniques are a significant aspect of their practice as writers. In a context such as this, a term like “audience” becomes misleading, and terms like “reading” and “writing” begin to refer to one and the same process, a commitment to the co-production of information which does not have commercial goals and exists primarily so that more information can be produced and shared.

Instead of (openly or secretly) setting our sights on the *New York Times Book Review* or *The Norton Anthology*, we need to locate aesthetic production in the communities it serves. The point is not to establish new canons and decide who is a major writer and who is not, but to produce writing that encourages a process of exchange, networks whose practitioners are providing each other with a system of intelligent interaction and support, an alternative to the pseudo-consensus that defines what it means to be “an American.”

MARK MENDEL

Well, this thing where one poet published for other poets doesn't tempt me, doesn't lure me, only drives me to bury myself deep in nature's woods, before a rock or a wave, far from the publishing houses, from the printed page...Poetry has lost its ties with the reader, he's out of reach...it has to get him back...It has to walk in the darkness and encounter the heart of man, the eyes of woman, the

strangers in the streets who, at twilight or in the middle of the starry night feel the need for at least one line of poetry...

—Pablo Neruda, *Memoirs*

What is content to the viewer is form to the artist.

What is content to the artist is form to the viewer.

—Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

When I began my experiments with an environmental presentation of poetry, my poems no longer occurred in a remote literary world, but outdoors in the public zone. McLuhan remarked that Americans, unlike Europeans, go indoors to socialize and go outdoors to be alone. Where else should a poem be but amid this rainy contemplation? Although people read constantly outdoors, the work of poets remained unfamiliar if not unknown in public culture. Except for the occasional recorded broadcast, the public scale of poetry remained that of the insidious fine print which one never read. As my painted wall poems began springing up in the everyday world, I began to consider and work with other available phenomena as transmitters for verse.

As the zone of poetry changes from the book to the viaduct, the readers change, and the poems change. The poem outdoors, without literary life-support systems, must adapt to survive. The environmental poem is out there with the wind and the traffic, with the bulldozer and the billboard. It struggles against the property owners who would reserve the public spaces for advertising; that manipulative poetry of the corporations. The poem adapts to its new environment with changes. In the same way that photography freed painters from the necessity of painting nature, the poem outdoors no longer has to be "about" a place. It may, without apology, be that place; it may transform that place. The tiresome introductions are unnecessary. The scene sets itself; the place describes itself, as places do. Place poem viewer. Liberation from the descriptive and the narrative. A constantly changing pattern. A new verse structure suited to the mechanics of the painted. So the diode/electrode pattern of the transistor became the model syntax for *Ojos Numerosos*. A poem, with one verse painted on each of twenty urban walls, was always on, always transmitting, "powered" at times by moonlight. Rewire the verbs.

There is a factory outlet nature to these poems. They go

directly from the poet to the reader, eliminating the editor, publisher, bookseller, and the structures supporting them. The environmental poem is ephemeral. On its last day the poem is read by the bulldozer operator.

As Cro-Magnon cave dwellers blew paint through reeds onto the hard walls of their world, poetry can serve to enliven the dead architecture of ours. This is the sprayed word; a poem fired from a gun, a midsummernight's special—the continuous, simultaneous transmission of a poem into the environment. The poetic word in the context of the corporate word.

We want to retain the blossom in the eye. That singular perception upon waking. But is that possible after our common passage? We all share the experience. The systems, political and social, the pressures of the corporate institutions, the 360-degree media spray, the dip into the paranoia tank.

The cloud forms; we respond. An unconscious hand runs through our hair; the simultaneous image moves across a video monitor.

From the moment we learn to write the words we speak and hear, we sense the inklayer of language that lies beneath our thoughts. When we write a poem it is on our hands.

We may hide in this circumfusion, like the cuttlefish, secret in his inky cast. Poems do refer to a personal world, but the spaces around the words, the spaces inside the letters, must not be blank spaces, but places in the real world. My poems are designed and installed like gauges to give direct reading of their surrounding in real time, in the present tense. There is a here here, I hope, where text and context may lie down together.

GALE NELSON

POETRY IN PRACTICE DESCRIBED

A Manifesto

In the words of Artemis, "I cannot eat field mice when posing for a statue."

Could the bare tree of summer compare to the fiddlehead crab of lonely paint brushes? Could temperatures rising

counteract a fountain of galvanometers set for placating dancing throw rugs? Are the encroaching armies of envelopes really our friends as you keep saying?

The hiccough of America was never that popular, but we elected to make it a Canadian import. The smaller the type, the lonelier the insurance salesman. The costlier the fish, the more likely it will have gone putrid before reaching the skillet. The messier the desk, the fewer bills to pay!

Count me in when you count to ten. Count me out when the drunk paper clip pelts our heads with blasted light bulbs. Are you following this? Then you must really read a lot. Could you follow the complicity charts when getting new specs? Then pleasure the larger sequence of napkins, torn by the gallery poster of kittens. I cannot contend with the list you've drawn, so I eat out, nightly.

Once in a while, a rapidity shelters a group of lynchpin sparrows, and I cower. What color comes before purple, I ask, knowing the answer is shadowed. This is the vortex of poetry. And this is where definitions break the backs of country wives who've never been to see *La Traviata* anywhere but within the rinse cycle of their latest gadget to save time, spent anyway.

Are you listening? Then back out of my office into the corridor with the bathrooms on it, and run to the nearest chalkboard. Are you filtering out the fundamental difference between kittens and my description of them? Five ways to make sure:

1. Kittens mew louder.
2. Artemis hasn't any field mice to feed them.
3. Weebles wobble.
4. Aristotle plays dirty when the corn withers.
5. Scholarly research has never proved a thing about enigmas.
6. Peacocks make pleasant cooing sounds
7. I rest my case.

Have you ever thought of making poetry out of strands of hair?, I was asked once by a passing minstrel in a dungeon built in the third century before the passing of Guy Fox. But who among us really wants to know the answer? And how long will it take us to bomb the Parliament of Poetry if we really want to follow *Robert's Rules of Order*?

I plead not guilty to that man's crimes!

I shout silently into the far reaches of the central heating

system, "Don't forget to play favorites!" And then, the little fingers pass over the keys, and I sequester the top row of symbols, leaving them to defend this questionnaire on the uses of force in non-contact playground sports and sewing circles of the 19th Century redrawn for our own purposes. Am I through? Of course I am. I never started. It's all the fault of Artemis. Had she just slurped the mice before I walked in with my little pail of clay, we'd have had a real mess of radishes to mull over. And therein lies the Tertiary claim: today is another data base for the fire escape, repainted black each summer to retain its elegant, frozen sensibility.

I am a crevice monger, thank you very much. And that is why I sought to touch my elbow to the verso, but was repulsed by a fist that struck me as being contemporary.

JENA OSMAN



What is an emancipated reader? I am not ready to answer because I am distracted by the fact that I can't recall the title of a book I read when eight years old. However, within the distraction, I remember the balloons over Krakatoa. Travel into/over battle for the sake of new distinctions, away from old demands.

Liberty is a land of diamond mines it seems. That is, until the island erupts, casts dust across the world and a general is suddenly deemed a god. The population gets back into the impoverished floating vehicles, away from Krakatoa. Distraction is the nature of my reading. Distraction—in a continual trade-off with contemplation/absorption—provides the most active theatrical reception. No matter how a poem fits within or against a tradition, no matter how definitively its motivations might be traced, there are moments in reading that defy a “proper” landing. These are the moments I find myself reading/writing/distractions into. They depend on a density of overlays; a presence (a barrier) in the space between audience and performance. To pretend the barrier is not there is to find the diamond mine, the consummately/consumptively auratic. But a completely alienated relationship is also an impossibility, due to the absorptive tendencies of distraction. The fourth wall is built, then torn away, then built again. Falling into the poem, stepping out of it; such an awkward mode of travel is the premise behind Oskar Schlemmer’s pole dancer. Twelve poles are attached to a dancer’s limbs, extending the lines which the gesture makes. In the act of extension, the body itself is limited to a small sphere of movement. Although a step can barely be made, the mechanics of the body are transposed into space; a beautiful otherly consequence to what is an obvious trap. In other words, the “idealist transformation” that occurs through a referential language is not something to be resisted, but acknowledged as one side of a flipping coin. My interest in puppets (“the theatrical inanimate”) is inherently linked to this idea of the vacillating audience response. The materiality of the puppet is undeniable; however, the audience *grants* the object life in the same way that a frightening shadow on a wall is granted a body. Such activity seems to join the political with the auratic. With a full awareness, you have allowed the puppet/the text to distract you; apprehension of the choice is never forgotten in taking such an option. The permission is conscious. Therefore, the puppet as a theatrical device is the most Brechtian effect I can think of, revealing a double body of lifelessness/alienation/distraction and life/empathy/absorption as the oscillating presence chosen in the process of reception. An island of diamond mines and of volcanic eruptions one after the other, without end. Not a place for a proper landing at all, not a place for a take-off either, yet

both are on the verge of happening. The transcendent resides in its grounded double and vice versa. Somewhere inside this paradoxical activity, I believe there is the possibility for a definition of liberty. I'm not sure of its precipitate: infinite failure of determinative meaning? a tension that promises the production of non-deceptive meaning? a hellish ride on a gerbil wheel? In his essay title "Diminished Reference and the Model Reader," Steve McCaffery quotes Umberto Eco: "You cannot use the text as you want, but only as the text wants you to use it." Is this true for the audience of the textual puppet, for the reader who chooses a receptive option according to a moebius strip of materiality and idealism?

KRISTIN PREVALLET

RESISTANCE

(*dance rite*)

TO RESIST

(that swallowed sea)

THE SLOTH

(begs her sand)

OF THE WORLD

("no retreat

until water as word

is no longer said

to swim")

THE POET MUST FLEX

"Let your presence ring out
like a bell into the night"

-Rilke

"Then there rises in him the
wine of sloth

Sigh of harmony which could
make him delirious

The child feels, given the
slowness of their caress

A surging and a dying away,
continually a desire to cry"

-A. Rimbaud

"There is any difference be-
tween resting and waiting

Does a little dog rest

Does a little dog wait

What does the human
mind do

What does human nature do"

-G. Stein

"Glimpses do ye seem to see
of that mortally intolerable

(dance the full force)

PERCEPTION UNTIL SIGHT

(from a body that slouches)

IS A SIGNPOST

(from sitting)

FOR SENSE

(extend the rite)

AND WORDS

(of passion,)

ARE AN IMAGE

(make sand glide down)

OF SURVIVAL

(like water)

truth; that all deep, earnest thinking, is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous slavish shore?"

-H. Melville

"To be alive itself is a form involving organization in time and space, continuity and body, that exceeds clearly our conscious design."

-R. Duncan

"I had written: 'the man who sewed his soles back on his feet'

And then I panicked most at the sound of what the wind could do to me"

-B. Mayer

EUGENE RICHIE

LETTER TO MAX JACOB

Dear Max,

I'm taking your advice to heart. I'm sure you've heard that before—in some film or in an ad on the radio or on TV, maybe in a little bit of conversation overheard while walking through Riverside Park, or you've read it in a magazine, a newspaper, a good book. I do believe that one can do that from where you are, though I'm not sure about seeing. Anyway, it's listening that makes the difference for me, but then changing too, as when Jiminy Cricket, scolding Pinocchio in the pool hall on

Pleasure Island, says, "You buttered your bread. Now sleep in it." So, as you say, "The poet puts in the right proportion of clichés: he can't give them up for fear of being incomprehensible. It's for him to know when he can place the word which is not a ready-made formula, so as to be new without being obscure." No need for me to repeat it. You've said that all already: "A lyrical line is the result of a conflagration. Only conflagration gives it density."

Pierre Martory has a poem, "*Toten Inseln*" (*The Isle of the Dead*), that begins, "The familiar voice, an old friend plucks me from the harbor's delights." This poem may help explain why Pierre, John Ashbery, Ed Barrett, and I were all sitting around one night in front of John's TV in New York watching Boris Karloff in *The Isle of the Dead*, gazing on the misty black-and-white close-up of that famous painting by Arnold Böcklin. Well, that's where the general in my poem "Trouble in Paradise" came from, but the title is from a different movie, which I have not seen, though I hope to see it soon. It was just a question someone asked me at a party once, and I'd wanted to respond, "Or is this Babylon revisited?" But I was too tongue-tied to do that, so my poem begins as a response to that comment.

Croton Reservoir is a body of water that fans out to the west of the Taconic Parkway. I've passed by it often on my way to and from Hudson, New York, where my wife, the poet Rosanne Wasserman, and I have a house. The light on the water and ridge at sunset is striking, but the reservoir is equally beautiful in the glaring light of midday, by moonlight or starlight, and even under a starless sky. As I traveled by it, year after year, it became a place of meditation for me. I would anticipate reaching it and then remember during the long drive what I had seen in those few moments while crossing the bridge on the Parkway. Also, it seemed somehow to be a repository of pieces of conversation, voices on the radio, and many other images I recalled on that trip from New York City to Hudson and back again. It reminded me, Max, of your advice: "The great thing is to live, live by imagination and the heart, to invent, to know, to play. Art is a game. So much the worse for anyone who makes a duty of it."

Long before that, I had heard Roberto Echavarren read his poem "The Reservoir" in Spanish, and since then I'd always imagined that this "body of water for public use" could also be

a repository for emotions and words, which, as you suggest, are the beginnings of any good line or poem: “Love words, love a word. Repeat it, gargle with it. As a painter loves a line, a form, a color. (VERY IMPORTANT).”

Marc Cohen once said poets were ambassadors of the interior. “I shall open a school of interior life, and I shall write on the door *Art School* ” is how you begin, and later, “There is creation only where there is invention.” So one goes around thinking about things, but I do believe that “Ideas have nothing to do with poetry: *it's the inexpressible that counts.*”

RAPHAEL RUBINSTEIN

ERROR AND AFTER

1.

Sometimes reading these books they write or reading about these books they write makes me also want to write books and sometimes it makes me want to not write any books at all, at least any books like the books they write, which I sometimes read or read about.

When I make rude gestures (as I am doing now) in the direction of the books they write it does not mean that I think it is easy to write those books. On the contrary, their authors belong to a select order of perfectly conditioned imaginations, and they don't take naps between sentences, and they know how to generate convertible currency. Attempting a page like theirs, I'm left breathless at the bottom. So yes, writing any book is not easy, even a book to which a rude gesture is the only possible response.

Once books were divided into those that were difficult to write and those that were not. (Of those books we now only read the former.) With us however all books are now equally difficult (or not-so-difficult) to write and we read all of them (or none of them), not realizing, except maybe some of us and only recently and only a little, that it is not the ease or non-ease or even the difficulty or non-difficulty of books that matter—what matters about books is who wrote them.

There are books and there are people who write books and there are different kinds of people who write different kinds of books. I've just been reading a book and wondering if the person who wrote it is really as corpse-like as his book. Maybe, maybe not.

"Why (outside of the common appetites) do I want to insert myself into this story?" I ask myself in the drowsy interval between glances—the window, the hand, the lips. If, after reading their books or reading about their books, I find myself wanting to write more of them, perhaps it is simply because I want someone to know, now or later, that their way of putting things or not putting things is or was not the only way people were like in these years in these places. And when I want not to write books and not read them and not read about them or write about reading them or write about writing them or not writing them it is simply because I am left

Motionless in Fear of Guilt by Association
and

Absent in Anger at the Music of the So-Called

2.

Each measured and remeasured utterance, pleading its
case somewhere
in the crowded terminal of borrowed voices and
broken promise.

Taught first to respect the difficulty of seriousness,
taught again to relegate it to histories of thin blood,
only a kind of wry surrender remained,
and the daily extinction of styles, and smiling stamina.

After the phrases that meant something
came those sounding like they meant something,
instant emblems broadcast on the page,
tiny mirrors in which the surrounding architecture
winked back at you.

If only silence were contagious.
I have before me two lists

yet find it hard to concentrate this afternoon,
 denser with hanging need
 than at the outset of volume one.
 A long dissolve is what it seems to resemble most.
 So, what can be done with those who figure on the first?
 Public scolding, followed by semi-oblivion?
 And the others? To become one of their number
 you need letters of blinding recommendation,
 which others call poems.
 I write to you from
 the cafe table where *Le Parti Pris des Choses* and *Paid on Both
 Sides* overlap,
 the passenger seat of a Buick being driven by the ghost of
 Laura R.,
 the outskirts of Alphaville,
 a rowboat in the middle of a lake whose rippling waters scatter
 resourceful clouds whose intentions were too dependent upon
 the gracefulness of their dissolution,
 the exact place where we've made our sometimes rendezvous.

SUSAN M. SCHULTZ

A (BRIEF) POETICS OF IMPASSE

All poetry has its ends, as well as its meanings; what it means comes eventually to spell its end. The modernists who knew this best took form to its logical end-stop, if not exactly to a dead end. Hart Crane and Laura Riding realized art's finitude when they stopped writing—Riding for the last fifty-odd years of her life. Riding (with Robert Graves) wrote a formalist poetics, centered not on poetry or language but on the naked poem:

The ideal modernist poem is its own clearest, fullest and most accurate meaning. Therefore the modernist poet does not have to talk about the use of images "to render particulars exactly," since the poem does not give a rendering of a poetical picture or idea existing outside the poem, but presents the literal substance of poetry, a newly created thought-activity: the poem has the

character of a creature by itself (*A Survey of Modernist Poetry* 118).

Creatures cannot live long on the substance of their own character, thought for its own sake. And so Riding's quest for Truth (capital) was subsumed by silence, though the recent publication of her early poems brings her back to us as a postmodernist poet, one who reclaims speech from its long absence.

The best poetry of our time takes this impasse, silence, as its subject; in her prophetic "Stanzas in Meditation," Gertrude Stein generates a nearly endless text out of the blockage she at once wants and avoids. This impasse lives between imageless words and the poet's desire for an audience over which she wields absolute control, the image of herself in her words. A more recent poetry of language creates or acknowledges the impasse between word and voice, image and text, then builds upon this paradoxical scaffold (I am here reminded of the local Hawaii saying that a building "is held up by termites"). Such poetry creates an audience of readers who refuse to be "put off" or "put in" the "unreadable" text. These readers create what Susan Howe calls "a narrative in non-narrative" or a history that is not chronological but immanent in the non-image the word brings to a text, concrete or otherwise. (Abstraction lives only in concretion). This is true of *Singularities* and of other books that make impasse itself a generative impulse. Ann Lauterbach's book *Clamor* takes silence, and the awkwardness of speaking a foreign tongue, as its central subject. Foreign languages are ever full of silences, invented as they go. Her headnotes are revelatory: Susan Howe's lines echoing Gertrude Stein: "There I cannot find There / I cannot hear your wandering prayer / of quiet," and Barbara Guest's lines presenting a vision of quiet: "So silence is pictorial / when silence is real." This gives us back the images, without which we cannot continue to write. It also renovates the oft-demeaned concept of transcendence ("your wandering prayer / of quiet"). We may have arrived back at our starting place but, as Stein knew, repetition is less repetition than insistence, and our insistence must be to write it all down (in Elizabeth Bishop's double sense of "writing" wrong). Poets must, above all, believe in their readers, make them full partners in a transaction that begins, but does not end, in impasse.

JULIANA SPAHR

CIRCLE OUT

Philosophy is written in this grand book—I mean the universe—which stands continually open to our gaze, but it cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures.

—Galileo Galilei

A defence of poetry: “it is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge,” Percy Bysshe Shelley.

When Emily Dickinson writes “my business is circumference” in a letter to Higginson she is pointedly leaving out the center.

John Donne pictures a circle of relationship with two legs: “Thy firmness makes my circle just/And makes me end where I begun.” While one travels as leg (male), the other is sedentary (female).

Gertrude Stein echoes Dickinson when she circles this business to be about travelling: “as I say a motor goes inside and the car goes on, but my business my ultimate business as an artist was not with where the car goes as it goes but with the movement inside that is of the essence of its going.” When she writes her “rose is a rose is a rose is a rose” it is in a circle, what is inside this circle and what is outside this circle is unclear.

Her phrase is about the way words are full of meaning.

The way in Ludwig Wittgenstein’s words “the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need.”

The word as the endless ripples of Ralph Waldo Emerson in which “the eye is the first circle; the horizon it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary picture is repeated without end. It is the highest emblem in the cipher of the world...Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn risen on mid-noon, and under every deep a lower deep opens.”

Declarations:

All that poet does is in a circle.

The circle as the image of the word suggests the many-ness of naming. Every end is a beginning. Every word is defined by another word.

It is the problem of the artist, Henry James writes, to draw “by a geometry of his own, the circle.” To picture a circle is to picture a form that cannot be drawn freehand. The question here is how much deviance is allowed before you have squared the circle? But also, how to square the circle? For this too is necessary.

One must give into form but not insist on its perfections. There are circles of confusion and circles of least confusion. There is the circle of ulloa—the white rainbow that is the impossibility of the glow that is brought out by the haze.

This is not about infinity but about the scope of the rotating body as Leonardo Da Vinci pictured it and the circular depth of the telescope’s sight.

This is not about connection but about escaping the line that takes one from one place to another place.

To live too much in a circle is to be caught in process.

To go full circle is to return but also to change.

This is the poet’s task: the lying word.

Interlocking circles build a cloth. This is called knitting.

It is something women do.

It is the healing of the leg, the growing of the foot.

TESSITORE

Rather than construct a long-winded statement of my “poetics,” I offer a brief selection of thoughts and ideas on poetry and being a poet that I have, at one time or another, thought to record.

Politics

There is, and has been for some time, great attention being paid to *Political Correctness* in literature. Political Correctness is in itself a fascist concept, as it subordinates an individual’s

values to collective ones.

Political Correctness is temporal. *Correctness* is eternal.

Poets legislate nothing. Anyone wishing to legislate, or effect change for the better, should be an arborist.

Nature

It is easily observed in most journals of poetry that Nature, and humankind's relationship with it, is believed a *necessary* subject for poetry, and that the existence of this relationship constitutes a basic and irrefutable truth. It is worth noting that humans do have something very important in common with the natural world—that is, a fair amount of carbon.

Poets legislate nothing. Anyone wishing to legislate, or effect change for the better, should be an arborist.

Schools/Movements

There seem to be more schools of poetry than can be counted or named. There are at least three which a reader can run into in almost any magazine or journal:

New-Formalism: an attempt to lend validity to what in many cases would be mediocre free-verse.

The *Don Quixote School*: This school upholds that poets are extra special people on a mission from the muse, and live in a world no longer suited to them. The basic tenet of this institution is that no poet shall write of a whorehouse without first convincing himself it is a castle of some nobility.

The *Tarzan in New York School*: Practitioners of this type of poetry believe everything should be viewed by the poet with a childlike innocence and a new wonder. In actuality, it is the poet's task to make the *reader* do this, and accomplishing such a task takes considerable knowledge and familiarity.

Contemporary Poetry

It has been said by someone that it is not the previous generation's poetry that a new generation seeks to destroy, but rather

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that poetry's excesses. The excesses of the current poetic mode are:

1. reliance on the present tense
2. closures in the progressive tense
3. the first person singular, or an inflated first person plural
4. dysfunctional parent/child relationships
5. private symbolism
6. ancient myths retold from an alternate political perspective
7. the adoption of myths and stories of other cultures by poets in no way connected with those cultures.
8. ethnic guilt
9. the omission of articles before singular nouns (often practiced by the *Tarzan School*)
10. poems after paintings
11. dreams
12. the words *moon, earth, stars, air, fire, water, breath, snow, nothing, begin, blossom, down, even, sing, coffee, green*, and above all, *rise*
13. Nature.

There is often discussion, in classes, workshops, and reviews, of the "occasion of the poem." The only occasion of a poem is the realization or rendering of a truth; all else is detail.

Poets and Being a Poet

Photo-of-a-poet: I am far more intrigued by those I've never seen. The most effective public image is that image which is created by the public.

Poets do not inhabit the palace of poetry; poets are the guards. Every so often the guard changes, and the palace is better off.

JOHN TRITICA

*EDGES OF THE MULTI-VERSITY:**Provisional Notes in a Practice*

I drive not toward the Uni-Versal, but toward the Multi-Versal. I suspect in any argument for the Uni-Versal latent desires for dominance of contemporary poetry and poetics. What makes me aware of the (im)possible is precisely the potential of the multiple in reading. And when the multiple is pursued in verse, so many possible versions of reading open. What I seek in my practice is to write poetry that plays out a range of reading that is writing, writing that is reading. Clark Coolidge models this continually in his writing: “To not finally know whether I am reading or writing.”

When the distinction between reader/writer blurs, the Multi-Versal patterns of thinking find a ground for operation. In one aspect of practice that has meant, for me, the “Improvisation” as investigation of reading/writing, writing/reading. Coolidge’s *Crystal Text* in 1986 acted as catalyst. I pick some of his lines: “A question is a hand reaching,” “I follow with an unrecorded eye,” “Open the mind to everything and follow the ink,” “The tongue enters the mouth only to find another already there,” “If only I could spell myself beyond ability,” and so on. I chose thirteen additional lines that intrigued me with their semantic alacrity and sonar discursiveness; they served as first lines for each poem in the series which I titled “Improvisation Beginning With Lines by Clark Coolidge.” It was quite a while before I gained confidence in the procedure.

After about seven months, the poems were complete. I’ve long thought that discussion of originality in contemporary poetry is most often specious. This is why Robert Duncan’s claim that he was a derivative poet is so generative for me. His work on H.D. allowed so much surprise to come forth in Duncan’s poetry and critical writing. Duncan’s example enables continued play in the “Improvisations,” and encourages me in the validity and tenability of my practice of actively and directly drawing on the affiliations of contemporaries. To date I’ve written a series that includes first lines by Gustaf Sobin, Sheila E. Murphy, Gene Frumkin, Rosmarie Waldrop, Joseph Donahue,

Susan Griffin, Richard Royal, Jerome Rothenberg, Charles Alexander, Nathaniel Tarn, e.e. cummings, and Ron Silliman.

“Improvisations” propose the provisional in semantics, syntax, and line. Gene Frumkin writes: “Sequence fails as measure.” And certainly this principle sustains the movement of the “Improvisations.” Where sound is thought, as Coolidge suggests throughout his incredibly varied poetic production, the sequential can be cracked open to admit far greater possibilities. Not coherence, but cohesion. Linkages and recombinations along the horizontal axis of language emphasize minute elements of language. I relieve the burden of lyrical ego not through syllabic or stanzaic structuring, but through choosing first lines elsewhere. The beginning of the line(s) can suggest a sonic or semantic direction (though the two are *never* entirely distinct). Other writers provide the point of departure, while I act to recognize potential for shifts in syntax, line, and density (destiny?) of construction. When this attention to horizontal movement is combined with vertical aspirations, the poem’s mobility results in an instability, variously “meshed with a future that cannot be grasped” (Maruice Blanchot).

— — —

For Duncan the Multiversity (his usage) was a trope of the octopus tentacles of the University. For me the Multi-Versity is a zone of liberalization and play in verse, existing largely outside the university. Not another dreary lecture of the anti-academic. I’ve received an important part of my training in universities, and have taught there. But the Multi-Versal seeks mobility in the Multi-Versity. The “Improvisations” are only one aspect of the Multi-Versal that enact the edges of a practice, and link my work to that of other poets presently working. The procedure helps me maintain pressured music in curved space. Within the limits of the possible, I press against what I do not know.

LIZ WAS

LET THE POET TICK

Where I live, poetry to most people still means rhyming verse, something for kids to hop & skip to, or fireside-cat-on-the-lap reflections about the world outdoors, crafted in tones to match the watercolor above the mantle. Pining after loved ones, lost ones, memories almost always in the past, whining a bit more politely than a country western song. I almost prefer this drek to the often self-conscious sophistication of the professional poetry world harbored in the university.

Poetry is traditionally a word-form that breaks the rules of ordinary language. But the institutions of academic study get uncomfortable with too much rule breaking. It's easier to teach a set of rules or teach how others have broken rules than to allow students to break their own. That would be too much anarchy for the great white halls.

Parallels can be found in both classical & jazz music, & in fact in all the arts, where in academia there are rules for breaking rules, where experimentation is formalized & constricted if not discouraged. Uncompromising experimentors & discoverers are generally found outside of the institutions, while those inside calmly & politely study what outsiders in past generations have done. Generally, famous dead white men are "the Greats" which students learn to emulate & imitate. Thus, 20th century educational institutions tend to lag farther and farther behind the evolution of the subjects they aim to teach, instead remaining cloistered in the past. Only lip service is paid to a generation of experimentation, in a token class on Joyce, or a survey class on "Post-Modern Poetics", while what's happening currently may be completely ignored.

Further, academia poses a hierarchy of genres: the less academic a genre appears, the lower it falls in the hierarchy. A major in concrete poetry, for example, is rare, or even an extended historical study of concrete poetry, how many are familiar with the work of bp nichol or Bern Porter?

Concomitant with reverence of the "greats" is the supremacy of classical "beauty." This is a notion outmoded in this century by countless forms of man-created disease, & by the pure media-enhanced pluralism of our age. The end of the reign of

beauty in all the arts is long overdue. "Structural perfection," too, is an outdated Vitruvian concept: the structure of contemporary languaged expression can stretch in every imaginable direction, delightedly shining through as the beauty in chaos itself.

A friend just came in as I sit writing this. I told him what I was doing & he said bluntly, "The problem with poetry is it's boring on paper." I agree with him that "it's meant to be spoken & heard," but I think it has no reason or right to be boring on paper, & I blame that fact on academic etiquette. From elementary school on, neatness, proper spelling & grammar are required. In college poetry, only the last rule is waived; in the small press poetry world, "neatness" often translates into fine letterpressed paper, handmade-paper covers, colophons, signed & numbered. Font style throughout a book is expected to be consistent, a minimum of imagery, certainly no photocopying, no superimposition of text or imagery, no diversity of font unless the work is obviously intended as concrete poetry.

The greatest barrier to the evolution of poetics in the academic realm (or in the professional poetry world) is the separation of disciplines. First, poetics, as it is first & foremost an aural & oral form, should be explored in the halls of the music department. There, the rule of "lyricism,"—poetry's term for "beauty"—must be deposed. The modern poetic ear must be trained to hear noise as music. The noisic sensibility, which opens itself to all & any combination of sounds is but one prerequisite for the evolution of modern poetics.

Poetry should be cross-disciplined with visual art, thus giving the okay to development & discovery in visual poetry, an absolutely modern & widely used form of which you see farther advancement in printed advertising than in academic publications. Imagery, then, could rise above the level of illustration in poetry to hold its rightful place as language itself. Or the beauty of the printed word, the individual letter, even alphabetic fragments might be given value, (a notion formalized in a little-known turn-of-the-century movement called "Lettrism"): this might require collaboration between the art, english, & typography departments. Lord, we could invite the computer graphics & desk-top publishing departments to the party as well!

The richness, the possibilities, the untried combinations & untested relationships of language as expression should be

studied *and celebrated*. Academia fetters poetry, delays its natural & inevitable evolution: is this for fear of appearing too non-intellectual? Professional poets only begin to let their hair down after a draught or two. Dare we count all the great alcoholic poets? Perhaps I've been suggesting a drug-free method to unleash the poetic mind. Poetry should be a form of therapy, but thanks to institutional constraints, it first needs some therapy itself.

Poetics is also a way of moving. A breath of poetics = international inhalation & extended exhalation. You may appreciate my intelligence but not my doing a headstand on your desk. I no longer fit into the academic milieu because I self-administered 10 years of cultural deprogramming therapy. This I have done by systematically breaking down the constraints of ego, consciousness, logic & linearity by first devoting several years to automatic writing, trancelwork & aleatory methods of writing. Breaking the constraints of genre purism by learning to create poetry without words, by reprocessing old prose, by engaging in multimedia & defining myself as "polyartist" rather than "a poet", "a musician", etc.

I studied the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writers like Bernstein, Andrews, Coolidge, etc., familiarized myself with the sound-poets like Bob Cobbing & bp nichol, & with international concrete & visual poets too numerous to mention, involved myself in a worldwide network of intermedia experimentation. I transform my poetic ear as well as my "voice" through *neologism*, making up words & looking at the invented language of others. Through noise training & other aural reconstruction. By following a fascination with semiotics, hieroglyphics, alphabets & language globally of the past & the future. By cultivating anarchism beyond the political & into the cultural realm. By opening openings by reserving judgment. By stirring up rather than refining style. By learning about language from five-year olds & younger.

Students of poetics should be taught to recognize, unveil, & release the limitations that years of schooling & aculturalization have formed, not to further develop & refine these limitations. They should learn to challenge, not imitate. An unlimited pallet of materials as well as an unlimited shopful of tools should be free for the poet's perusal. Modern poetics must express themselves¹ in "a zillion different ways"² or suffocate in the stench

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of real life.

¹Even the grammatical allowance of the plural noun “poetics” seems like an elitism invented by men in white halls.

²This is as my son & I would speak in the course of a day. Such colloquialism should be allowed to appear without quotation marks. Even footnotes should be given freedom to appear in the body of the text. Question all forms. Form all questions.....

SITUATION: SUBJECT AND POSITION

MICHAEL BOUGHN

SOME MORE POETICS

A where, a where abouts. A where the sun rises, cold and precise, a where we watch it rise from following the roads or where they end. Where clouds of large black birds at the edge rise to its rise, screeching, raising a ruckus, a clamor over the roofs through the mist. The great black cloud, at the first touch of light, reels up forever, a paen, a pain.

A hunger pain. An unhealable wound. The birds' ruckus bounces off bone, a paen, where it rises and where we watch it rise from, a pain, and all around the tree creatures sway it. Where abouts they sleep. A here and there gashed in the hillside through the trees. They sleep in trees, enormous, black, devourers of flesh. Over head in the night. Bestowers of dream which rise screeching.

The racket bounces off bone, a black surging chord. A where, a where abouts. A where it flies in the singular yellow light, a where it watches us from. A here and a there and the trees between. A gash in the hillside. A where each flies to. A where we pass it tearing bloody strips from road kill. The singular gash of its knowing, its hunger, out of the clamor. A paen. A pain.

CLINT BURNHAM

(MY) POETRY AND (my) HISTORY

The essential mystery or secret of any poetry is how it came to be formally. That is, what enables one poet to write in fairly traditional stanzas and image patterns, thereby ensuring publication in the New Yorker, etc., while another poet will "choose" concrete work, effectively sealing the fate of that work to marginal, small press venues? This secret or mystery is overdetermined, like everything else, and thus has little to do with the "expression" of the poet's subject position and a lot to do with how that position will speak itself. I was born into a lower middle-class white Canadian family, second or third generation Irish and British. The economics of my parents' occupations in the sixties and seventies (my father is a low rank officer in the air force, hence more a technician than a professional; my mother

was a bank teller and secretary) determined to a large degree their acculturation. The various trailer parks, apartments and military rental housing I grew up in were veritable wombs of mass culture, the walls affixed with Christmas tree lighting contest plaques, spoon collections or third rate ceramics purchased in Germany. In this *hysteron*, culture as such did not exist: it was not for us. So my turn to writing poetry in my teens was rightly viewed by my parents as dangerous (I was mentally ill, they decided), for it made no sense at all to do something that was neither a job nor a hobby.

I think that this class violence had a large effect on how I entered poetry; that is, it was not sufficient simply to write easily understandable or “instrumental” texts. Since the entire enterprise was suspect and offered no possible return on any investment (to use Bourdieu’s metaphors), I might as well invest libidinally in the field that was most marginal. So, writing poetry that even I didn’t understand, which naturally led to reading the more formalist and avant-garde traditions, was a way of building a non-career around non-expectations. This is also why, as a student, I became interested in literary theory. In both cases, the mainstream canon was seen as too onerous to acquire legitimacy in: since I had not grown up reading Jane Austen or listening to Beethoven, to suddenly attempt to display what for others was literally bred knowledge, to try this “on my own” and starting from scratch, seemed much too difficult. In similar fashion, working mostly in small press and self-publishing enabled me to “act out” my distance from those suspect forms of capitalism.

But married to my readerly and writerly embrace of the opaque text is also, I find, a strong desire to present some work in fairly transparent manners, if only for rhetorical effect. I think this is also a function of that mass culture womb that I was dragged kicking out of at age 18 to face the sun of art. That is, the mass cultural objects on the walls and in the stereo were manifestly useful. The radio was on in the morning to provide weather and school closing information. The plaques my father received whenever he was transferred were on the wall to perform an identification. This instrumentality of the artistic object does carry over into my work, I think, precisely because the organic nature of the mass culture womb functions as some uto-pia for my praxis now.

DANIEL DAVIDSON

TOWARDS AN APPPOSITIONAL POETICS

Listen to the film in your hands...

—*Bureaucrat, my love.*

During the past fifteen years reaction to overtly personal or psychological material in exploratory poetics has not been kind. Often seen as lacking credibility, even as anathema, a fundamentally personal, subjective poetics has by and large been avoided, through methods that privilege an ostensibly decentered view, or perhaps more often, through redefining and transfiguring personal material as to render it constituent of a nonsubjective world. Resistance to subjective poetics is not without merit: belief in the absolute credibility and inalterable value of personal material—a focus limited to that which is self-consciously “known” or “felt”—can easily lead to a raft of epistemic problems of representation and mimesis, often abandoning rich fields of speculation and appropriation. And it is the more speculative, thoery-based domains of thought and conception that have proved so productive in recent writing, an expanded sense of what is relevant that has yielded critical evaluations of landscapes virtually unapproachable from a perspective limited to personal material. The Imperial Self has been reduced and expanded, reduced to a much more limited sense of separation, and expanded beyond its own individual contingency. With abandoning the cult of the personal has come a radically amplified referent, accessing domains better suited to qualities and designs common to the atomized, hyperpersonalized/depersonalized nature of current social environments.

These adaptations have not been accomplished without some expense, primarily of affect. Personal material is allowed entrance into the text most frequently as a conditional set of elements within a larger, fundamentally objective field. This assemblage of the personal within a frame larger than the personality of the individual is certainly credible: there can be no “individual” without the contextualizing, generalized elements within which the subjective exists. However, the subjective cannot ultimately be defined as such without denaturing the very fabric of the subjective itself. To define single-point reference as indistinguishable from a larger, objective field is to expand the horizon of the subjective beyond its definition, beyond its capacity to maintain self-identity, causing a rupture in location that

serves neither to contextualize the specific nor give specific reference to the general.

The problem, however, lies not in conceiving subjectivity as fundamentally contingent upon a larger field of objective location, but in the attempt to fix identity within oppositional points. Though it is true that specific performance occurs within a field of generalized potentiality, the performative event termed “individual” dropping out of (or exploding into) this field, neither performance nor potentiality can exist in a “pure,” noncontingent state. Consider the impossibility of a generalized background of potentiality without specific realization. Potentiality is inconceivable without the emergence of a limited, particularized event, as performance is entirely dependent upon potentiality. To position writing as part of a generalized social and political frame while disavowing individualized material as being merely psychological delineates a subject/object construction overly defined by exclusive, oppositional polarities, *i.e.* “I”/“Other” or “I”/“World”. Such binary constructions necessitate attitudes toward self and non-self that are exclusive and totalizing, inherently arguing against the political and social value of individual experience.

Identity-location within the poetic text is fluid, never occupying a single position, contingent upon interpretation at the same time that it is, in some ways, quantifiable and definitive. The capacity to occupy mutually exclusive positions is common to poetic statement; there is no necessity that meaning be fixed as either interpretive or defining. Self in writing is always difficult to locate precisely, and the need to define a consistent point of view—realized as either self-possessed or anti-psychological positions—is a limiting valuation not decisive to production or interpretation. It is tempting to assert that “writing is elemental” or “writing is subjective.” I argue that writing is neither, and that an exclusive dichotomy between performance and possibility too quickly closes off interpretation. This is not to privilege a marginally defined sense of the person, nor do I make equivalent the specific and the general, the individual and the world. There is in fact an “outside of” these oppositional subject/object distinctions, constituting a layered, appositional front where subject and object are not reduced to their extremes, separated to either an illusive and mystified or a concrete and materially relative sense of identity and the world. Writing is neither entirely self-relevant nor not-self; rather, it inhabits a range where self and non-self are only two points—perhaps not the most important two—among many.

The personal is in fact political; if we wish to expand the interplay of personal and political material within the poetic text then there must be a greater acceptance of unalloyed subjective positionings in the production of poetic writing. The abstraction inherent to writing is allied to the unity of data and communication. The process of writing is a coalescence of its social function, describing an immanence of subjective position that is at once intrinsic and extrinsic, dependent upon itself and dependent upon the world. The impossibility of single-direction utterance enunciates a framework for social, political, collective interplay, the specific location of any group of utterances casting itself into a further embrace as the interdependence of subject and object is uncovered. This interplay implies a less restricted use of personal material, the specific position required by a vital, interdependent whole. Within the body of the personal is the closest available world; but rather than ascribing the closest as better, I argue that in writing there is a social interplay that underlies distinctions, an apposition that appends disparate points. The use of this appendage is a *personal* one, of engagement with material embodied in the social act, a terrain of interrelation that is not separate from the terrain of the personal.

JEFF DERKSEN

CONTACT ZONE, BUFFER CITY

I try to view my work along two frequently intersecting axes—one of signification and one of subjectivity.

But for you, I mean it in a nonmonetary way.

“The ideal is to till the knowledge from the soil first before we erase the blackboard.”

“How does the deconstruction of the sign, the emphasis on indeterminism in cultural and political judgment, transform our sense of the subject of culture and the historical agent of change?”¹

Scud as a sexual term.

I’m worried, like jell-o in a willow tree.

But place is a nervousness acted out with legs which I can only see as a luxury right now.

Texts shouldn’t be less complex than one’s own subjectivity, and perhaps in some ways they can’t be.

I incorporate a corporate logo in “an almost delicious palate of natural light and saturated colour.”

The shifting from code to code, the multiple application of these common codes, isn’t a unification or a dissemination, but a “constant information activity.”

In 1971, Canada wasn’t sure if it should be a national park so in 1988, they called it “multiculturalism.”

Anthropological tropes of national literature (official verse) view the subject in an eternal present with many of the complications we negotiate each day, that constitute us as subjects, left out.

You can become “common humanity” too.

Or the landscape is an unencumbered brushstroke from the flatbed of a railroad car.

Work at the level of signification (as a process) provides options to limited definitions of subjectivity (and therefore agency) in a way I find compelling and necessary.

If the marketing of the seventies is as pervasive as that of the sixties, then I’m setting myself on 33 1/3.

The salvage of the “savage” that can cause a nation complete.

My reading of the New American poetics, particularly, was a process of transculturation as I came to them first through the *Tish* poets.

Despite its title, the film *1964 Mercury Outboards Troubleshotting* was about gender construction.

“Patriot” missiles bomb Baghdad on the night that Clinton’s inaugural festivities begin—recently in my work I’ve turned to irony as a sort of context stripper.

But to “make the stone stony” or to make the world perceivable and other ocular metaphors are no longer the imperative of poetry.

In 1980, SUNY hosted a Canadian Poetry Festival—the poster used the same image of the RCMP Musical Ride that is on our old fifty-dollar bills.

After N.A.F.T.A., “North America” includes Mexico.

That is, I’m looking for the appropriate form of worry, but can’t find it outside of my body.

I’ve turned to a more hybrid text, trying to provide more information in an attempt to complicate the space in which the text allows or constructs a certain type of subjectivity.

Sometimes I wish I were a salmon, swimming in the deep green sea, or a rock cod way down in the rocks, way down in the rocks.

That is, I don't want to throw out the sign with my structuralist bathwater.

That pulp and paper are "in my blood" is the patriarchal view.

What happens to the poetics of place when your only "place" is your body and it's not moving?

Nor is it enough to lay bare the contexts of meaning.

Still, I'd rather be a statistic than a metaphor.

On a ship made of paper I will sail the twenty-six seas.

Parallels between a hybrid text and the hybridity of the subject—a simultaneous mimicking and construction.

Something deep inside liberal cultural relativism says "Yes I can."

Since the seventies, a movement from production to excess to evaluation—all political, all pointing to the ambivalence of the authoritative word.

"They should raise a monument to a fisherman crouched down behind a hogshead..." but that would be just nostalgia for fish.

"Later in the year, when I feel business is under control, I would like to retrace the 1858 journey of Richard Burton and John Speke to the source of the Nile and write a book about the experience."

Lay bare the perceiving subject (which the colonizing act of travel writing refuses to do) as well as the conditions that construct our subjectivity.

¹Homi K. Bhabha. "Freedom's Basis in the Indeterminate." *October*: 61, 1992.

SUSAN GEVIRTZ

The road that runs out of town. And the idea of the road. Along it wild dogs pick at garbage. All wild dogs return to this idea. You and I head out into the desert. Not quite alone yet no one else walks. I am looking into the underbrush for a dead horse carcass. Instead, wild horses. Later, out the window of the bus I see a carcass. On the road before we arrive at the bay, an ambulance with its siren on, barrels down a road that meets ours; recent ruins of old factories appear. On their crumbling walls large words are painted in primary colors. Our hours of

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approach are rinsed in bleach—the light under which all objects here become more than themselves while being pared away.

Memory working the yard like a rake: backwards and forwards and in waves:

You are
the not yet
changed
same
interlocutor

and yet you live
as outside the city
missing

attention, under seige

The state of stage:

Begin at that which *is the most unbearable*.

—Irigaray

Interviewer: And when you are not being watched?

Interviewee: By whom?

I: We had written to each other over great distances always approaching a contact veil kept us going

I: There are more dead than alive and it is to them that we turn

I: to effect an intervention

It is not clear who is alive and not. Open bodies of water. First life and minimal life. Breeding itself: a photo that never finishes developing. No words for thought of elements only signs.

The obsessional lives in the universe of the “I”; there is no interlocutor. The hysterical, on the other hand, cannot assume his or her own discourse; everything is referred for validation to the you.

—Irigaray

Interviewer: Consider beauty, accident at the hand of necessity.

Interviewee: Please fill in the blank: I write in american english and think in _____.

I: Are you afflicted with nostalgia for what never was or has not yet become?

I: On Veterans Day the Pacific unknown met the Atlantic unknown. Both wrapped in shrouds. Flags for faces as tenderly they were laid out next to each other. This meeting of the remains—what does it leave to us?

Where has it left us before
the violation of silence

I: Is there an outside?

I: Into an interim.

C.S. GISCOMBE

793 WORDS ON WHERE THINGS GO

Canada, I'd sd at the end of my first book, was further North than we'd imagined.

And in the 2nd, of the same place (of, specifically, the St. Lawrence): *the first edge/of the great covenant/with space//the arrangement //into here/ & whatever lies beyond the gestures/in its direction.*

In the 3rd: *I dreamed I saw ourselves on the coast//wading in the Atlantic off Senegal, off Gambia,//the coast of beautiful Gabon or Cameroon, I couldn't tell,//but there were white people on the cliffs above us//the pale voices clearly phrased in the wind //at our backs as usual & waking I saw it had been the dunes on Lake Ontario I saw,//that we'd been at the end of Rte. 414, at the end of upstate N.Y.,//that it was Canada across the water,//more ambivalent than we'd thought for an archetype//all invisible etc. to be so big.*

The 4th book, the poetry-book-in-progress now, is *about Canada.*

The title of this document's "poetics for Gizzi &

them"—had to save it as *something* on this disk & so w/out effort or particular thought went right into the voice of my childhood among the first generation of people born in the North. "Where you goin'?" "With Gizzi and them." (My apologies, Ms. Spahr, for turning you into the plural 3rd person—Gizzi was the name I'd heard before & so it clicked.) For years I thought I myself had been born down in Birmingham, that "my mother bore me in the Southern wild" (to hell w/ the little English boy). But I was born in fact, as we'd all or mostly been, in Ohio, parents from Dixie. They were the last wave of the great migration: North. The archetype, perhaps *its* birth or, more correctly (since the archetype is *old*), its coincidence with my birth, my coming up.

No point though in trying to face it (the archetype, North) in language or any other way as some destiny (peculiar, racial, magical, some E-Z metaphor)—rather my interest is making use of knowledge about geographical situation: where one is situated in relation to geographical entities (streets, rivers & bridges, embankments, sides of quite real tracks) & coming to terms with that: a poetic of situation(s), reference, notation, placement. Baraka sd something about "the slick city people we became." I'm wanting to use the slickly represented edge(s) of the city as the other intelligence—beyond the native or alongside it—, the one the poem lives in. Feeds on? Becomes?

I find myself these days at work on—in addition to poetry—a book of autobiographical travel essays wch seemed to me at first to be at odds with poetry. But it's possible to see them, the essays, as description not of the poem but of where I was when I was making it: that the motion through landscape—the motion's terribly specific but unnamable in a clear-eyed prose break-down—is, OK, "the poem" & that the essay is a simple-minded map (to paraphrase an M. Atwood narrator) to where a vision could be had, not necessarily to the vision itself.

Though vision itself is a synthesis, a mixed bag, a merger. John Morgan's "Libra" poem from *Intersections*: "'The cells try to come to terms with the site.'" (Quoting a radio broadcast). But the first poem I saw anyone *make* was in the 6th grade. Our teacher, an unconscionably racist lady of no discernable intellect, could never recollect the name of our classmate, Steveson Moore, & sd one day out of that exasperation "I always want to call you Sylvester" to wch Steveson Moore replied, in that first-generation-growing-up-in-the-North lilt, "I always want to call you Dick & Jane" thus marrying w/some precision the most ostentatiously banal named aspect of all our lives in that

school—our experience thus far in our progress North—to that lady, the representative on earth of those who would perpetrate such banality on us or any group of humans.

Didn't he synthesize? Revising her statement by repeating it & taking the proper names of those 2 literary incorporeals & making 'em into a title that was at once definitive & significantly destructive (meaning explosive tho' the resonance of said explosion was lost on her). My boy came to *terms* with the conditions; or he brought terms to them. He made the conditions look, or *sound*, like him, like all of us. Didn't he deftly transform that innocent little effort to take his name?

My book-in-progress is about specifically black names—specifically this one, Giscombe or Giscome—up there in Canada.

The poem as geographic statement of situation. "The path traced by a moving point." The poem faces North as it moves into & out of situations, speaking to 'em in a language of site-specifics.

PETER GIZZI

FOR THE TIME BEING

Everything that is not myself is incomprehensible...
In my left waistcoat pocket I carry a most faithful likeness
of myself: a burnished steel watch. It speaks, indicates time
and does not understand anything about it.

Everything that is myself is incomprehensible.

—Louis Aragon, *The Adventures of Telemachus*

I write because I read.

What I know is that I walk a surface—and fall to order and to chaos both. Where foot follows foot, not all one's propensities are toward stillness. Even when I walk "away," I traverse the space between my body and another (a poem, a book, a person). What I want a poetry to do is to make a space free of location, a rest which exists (like Zeno's arrow) in transport. If we could step back far enough, would all motion be elliptical? Augustine says, "it is the same I throughout," yet in the process this light (the world) has changed. One must look away and yet must not.

If poetry does have a subject, it is time and the mutability of

forms.

Poetry is neither a map nor a garden. Though it locates me—even, I want to say, is a “recovery”—with and from *something*. Poetry extracts words from their contexts with some traces of their passage still intact. Poems alter our reading of the present by both fulfilling and negating the illusion of our hands and bodies. In bliss or in hunger, no matter. Lyric history is a site of perception, of duration and play. There is no ethical discourse that can contain the indifference that a poem’s knowledge contains. It is the material creation of absence in words. An occult circuitry. *Listen*. To bring things into the present is to bring them into complexity. Sitting in a room alone, I am an object. I is an illusion of ink and pain. A stain amidst the light.

JESSICA GRIM

POETICS

Eats dirt. Still thinks the word is round. Doesn’t have cab fare. Flies low over low lying areas. Catapults over the railing to the canopy of trees far below. Of the letter read backwards. On ice. Quilted. Quaffed. Arriving next day mail. Parallel parked. Just dropped off. Strung up by its simulacrum. Dipped in jimmies. Was weaned too early. Honks if it agrees with me. Is sexier than rutabagas, more powerful than dust. Is being served everywhere we go, with a variety of light sauces, or just by itself. Mowed, plowed, raked. Is cheap and popular, spray some on.

That impulse. To dismiss. I WANNA WRITE WITH MY LEFT HAND, MOVE OVER. Fascination with unit grammar and the desire to keep that thrown off are best together. I’m not just sure what it is I think a sentence can do, or not. Or what I think something that’s not a sentence, can do. Trying to write poetics feels like using a different medium. The wordprocessing program suggests I mean “pothooks” rather than “poetics.”

Something about writing about writing in this way. Language pulled a fast one. Actually, I’m interested in the stigma of emotion. *My ideas are having a hissy fit*. Writing as both the hopelessly attractive, and the hilariously destructive tool of the chronically self aware. A heady emotionality built up after the language imploded, or while it was imploding. Copping to the level of vulnerability in my writing.

Equal pressure from all points...I wonder what kind of

writing that would produce...A disassembled ego, the deconstructed I, the ultimate diversion. Maybe. I'm so *uncollected*. The notion that one's poetics can be produced from/out of one's work. Momentousness inserts itself into the text.

JEFFERSON HANSEN AND MARK WALLACE

SITUATION & POETRY: A DIALOGUE

MW: There is no such thing as language. There are words and their histories, there are contexts, structures, ways of speaking, languages that often contest or merge with each other, a boisterous and fragile multiplicity. But there is no monolithic center which the word "language" could mean. There are certainly, in differing contexts, languages with different kinds of (though always changing) power. The languages of "capitalism," for instance, or "sexism." But in what sense could those languages constitute a single, empowered center? Capitalism in America uses sexism, now, because capitalists feel that is the best way to sell. But would capitalist structures use sexism if it didn't sell? What forces do we *empower* by seeing language as a monolithic, centralized force with power over us, even if we intend to resist it?

I write to create multiplying, reaching words that are their own act of meaning in the midst of what I am part of. Such words resist other meanings (and the powers supported by those meanings) that they find intolerable or offensive, but always as part of the changes they create and are. Writing, for me, is active creation of the words in which my life will mean.

JH: White heterosexual men may be especially susceptible to the myth of Language as monolith. We are not separated by certain inescapable facts of our anatomy from those who have traditionally made the large impositions of language in the spheres of capitalism, of religion, politics, and war. Even if we disagree with the choices of those who make these policies, we feel connected to them in ways that women or minorities may not. Their gender or race sets them apart from the kind of people that have usually made

monolithic (read powerful) decisions. My guess is that they do not have the same oedipal relationship to power as white men since they can never hope to take over power as long as the game is played by the present rules. White men may take monolithic Language as the totality of languages because we feel that we can do something about it, that it is amenable to the will of our kind.

A possible strategy is to place the mass language of politics, marketing and pop culture in a poem with other languages of, for instance, domesticity and our own particular histories with words (*i.e.*, our series of experiences). Such a strategy would distance us from the monolithic myth by making language that is mass only one moment of the linguistic acts of a poem. It would not make the mistake of dismissing the power of this mass language by fleeing into some sort of hermeticism, and it would critique mass language's seemingly monolithic appeal by offering alternatives to it. Sure, we are made selves, but we are made in many different contexts: the languages happen through and about us, lush, ready for poetry. Transformation is there, in the languages we tend to, often without knowledge.

MW: The clock on the tower was not working I walked out to ice on the streets to keep an appointment with doctors professors homicide and sales on wine and a poetics appeared in the spaces between my hand and the sky I said and saw. Priorities were not a train to well-defined locations but careened through the jungle to the scales of the alligator man I was a teenage nuclear testing site was all I wanted a little fun midnight in the park dawn in the basement of guilt "could you say that again" "probably not." Car wheels skidded in the angry snow of listen to me. The city was cold so we bought heaters but they burned our limited incomes.

JH: A computer hums, blues on the radio (Carey Bell), brownies from the kitchen. We said this was a city of snow, a city of the drift of things. Last year. Now it's home and, well, many things like Jewett's convenience store on Jersey and Parkside and the tree that blew over on the parkway last night. This is a habitation of sound, a sounding what comes to me of this place in my time.

Call this an exploration of identity beyond the obvious. No, I cannot speak for all white, straight males. But we

share some things. *Not all in this town, though.* We muddle and jumble more than we know; some collection of happenstance sounded, sounded by this: I believe it moves towards opening where I am as in have been, for myself and others, artifacts of a ceaselessness, in circles appearing and disappearing, wanting a

MW: in the interaction between a street and an eye in the interaction between a mouth and a mouth in the interaction between a cage and a flood in the interaction between a bear and a lion and a canary in the interaction between Wilson Farms and Seven-Eleven in the interaction between Derrida and Olson in the interaction between Stein and Picasso in the interaction between the water on your leg in the interaction between 8 a.m. and a grumpy frown in the interaction between a bed and a body in the interaction between in the interaction between and between in the interaction what was who doing in the interaction between was anybody there

JH: Do we take to an interaction a consistent response to the type of situation, a usual way of behaving there, sunk to the level of a muscles' automatic response? Between the reckless car and me behind the wheel is my foot toward the brake. Between the purchase in my hand and the words from the cashier is my hand in my pocket. Between your comment about poetics and the abundance of possibility is my jaw jabbering, well, *this* stuff. Some moments light up my muscles: discussion with another set of assumptions, a poetry line itching in my brain, taking my fingers to some place I hadn't bothered to notice. It's all here, in my body, doing its thing, able to be opened, transformed, brought to you in this package of guessing and choosing.

MW: How does form change what can be said? How does dialogue differ from monologue? How does the winter change the metaphors I write today? How does writing on a computer differ from writing on paper? How does printing one poem after another differ from printing one poem per page? How does the fact that I am described and treated as "white" differ from the fact that I am described and treated as "male"? How does how I am treated differ from how I treat others? How does a poem differ from a bureaucracy? How does "how" differ from "why"? How does an answer

differ from a question? How does transcendence differ from engagement?

A poem is experience and mediates experience. Its locations make what is here as part of what is not here. Then there was differently.

How could it have happened if you had not been there?
How could you have been there if it had not happened?

William Burroughs: "To live is to collaborate."

JH: We can write because we are with others making and listening. I like poems that skillfully use lots of pronouns and prepositions, turning the poetry on how we are in language, communal, relating. The questions for me become: "How do we relate?" "Do we relate through social roles?" "Is a love relationship a specific type of role?" A way of beginning some answers is to note that a role entails partaking in a highly conventional social ritual, such as checking out at the register or engaging in polite chatter at a party. Is a love relationship, then, being acquainted with many of another's roles? Or is it a type of role, a ritual of intimacy? But a ritual implies little negotiation, and intimacy implies a lot. Is a relationship not a role because it includes negotiation at a basic level?

What is my/your relationship to our languages? How do and how can we sound them in poetry?

AKUA LEZLI HOPE

As the third generation of my families in the U.S., I've inherited both the idealism of the first and the skepticism of the second. I would like to believe that I'm less accepting than either and that I will be less disappointed. I write to record the urban, Black, émigré, technopeasant mythos; to conduct a mythopoetic exploration of: ethnicity and interculturality, neo-Afrikan American psychographics and semiology, the reinvestment of indigenous jazz and funk with motive force and votive power, identity and acculturation, struggle and joy, and transcendence and passion.

I work to improve my craft, to lengthen my reach, to better block, strike, pluck or embrace...to create world-class literature, to be a force for good in the world (this relentless call to sing!), and to make peace irresistible.

The intricate sets of economic relationships in the Northeastern U.S. and literary world impinge on my writing. I engage in a political practice that includes organizing for human rights, involvement in issues affecting the African American community, and diversity efforts in several organizations; spiritual reflections and readings; weaving, crocheting, singing, music making and creating; retrieving memories from my parents and others; reconciling the model of marriage with the reality of my life; contemplation, and cohabiting with cats who sometimes speak and always yell and purr.

What Poetry Does

Poetry asks essential questions

Poetry reminds of sacred histories

Poetry provides code clues

Poetry is word music

Poetry is shaped silence

Poetry is the soul's songs

Poetry is responsible for incarnating youth

In living a life at risk

In living a life in a world at risk of imminent dissolution

In living through the plague years

In living with fear

In living with the knowledge that citizens of color are still beaten, lynched, raped and killed with an incomprehensible impunity

In living with the knowledge that citizens of gender are beaten, raped and slain with impunity, that citizens of particular preferences are harrassed, threatened, beaten with impunity

In this living through and with this life, I write.

I believe I have a sacred trust and a mission. I must be scrupulous in identifying and encoding my culture as it melts, I must be the ethnologist and anthropologist, I must record this struggle to breathe free. Though I was born in the second half of the twentieth century in a great city, I am still, too often the first of my part of humanity to stand before, or to be in certain circumstances. I am a pioneer of others' dreams and I must document the journey. I must mark the trail so that it's easier for those who follow.

While some say that there's nothing new under the sun, I am

unburdened (and uncomfoted) by some vast history of folks working through this circumstance, through these languages and with these layers of culture. Which me should I be? Why the eons and short decades of me. An African antiquity, a European colonial history, a Caribbean configuration, an American adventure—a love of that interstice, islands to islands in my past, and an education in the business of this land—business.

What Poetry Does

poetry makes no thing happen
poetry causes ideas to flow
the heart to rebound
its rhythms to wriggle
life's codes to be intercepted and downloaded
and sometimes decoded

a systematic derangement of the senses
a systematic infusion of sense and insight
a systematic reach for revelation and epiphany
a systematic application of wordcraft to work wonders

We live in an age of literacy, knowledge drenched and information parched while the sheer numbers of people with the keys to the kingdom increase, the probability that they'll unlock the doors, retreats. Why do we know so much and do so little? How can we go so far and know nothing of our geography? Poetry makes sense of it. Poetry provides the history when the official record limits vision.

Poetry Is Not A Luxury

Writers remain the victims of repressive regimes because WORDS AND IDEAS MATTER. How words are transmitted and how ideas are exchanged, either with other writers in the community of publication, or in the society at large, matters a great deal. What words are transmitted and what ideas are exchanged matter, too.

“Poetry is not a luxury”, wrote starpole Audre Lorde in *Ikon* # 1, Second Series, 1982. “It is a vital necessity of our existence....Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. Poetry is not a dream or a vision, it is the skeleton architecture of our lives.”

Poetry is the media available to me. I have no access to the

capital intensive artforms like film making and I live in economic exile from a community that would support African American theater.

Poetry puts the locus of control and effect at my center. It takes the world in and emanates this better vision.

MYUNG MI KIM

FIELD OF INQUIRY

Utterance. Disappearance.

Two tongues instruct. Slippery imminent mutable. Posit two tongues. Neither native, either mutating.

Erosion of the enunciating subject.

Language places the subject in process — plural, shattered.

Subject in the making. Subject on trial.

From a bare fist relational.

Sediment, variegation, wander, corpus — implications for a lyric notational yet flesh. Ground of the lyric as it registers the barely traceable, bearing force of perception, speculative and contoured.

Necessity and urgency of the poem enacting shape.

There is no composition, no singular trace — rather, a tracery, polysemous, multi-directional, emerging form.

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We live in an age of literacy, knowledge drenched and information parched while the sheer numbers of people with the keys to the kingdom increase, the probability that they'll unlock the doors, retreats. Why do we know so much and do so little? How can we go so far and know nothing of our geography? Poetry makes sense of it. Poetry provides the history when the official record limits vision.

Poetry Is Not A Luxury

Writers remain the victims of repressive regimes because WORDS AND IDEAS MATTER. How words are transmitted and how ideas are exchanged, either with other writers in the community of publication, or in the society at large, matters a great deal. What words are transmitted and what ideas are exchanged matter, too.

“Poetry is not a luxury”, wrote starpole Audre Lorde in Ikon # 1, Second Series, 1982. “It is a vital necessity of our existence....Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. Poetry is not a dream or a vision, it is the skeleton architecture of our lives.”

Poetry is the media available to me. I have no access to the

capital intensive artforms like film making and I live in economic exile from a community that would support African American theater.

Poetry puts the locus of control and effect at my center. It takes the world in and emanates this better vision.

MYUNG MI KIM

FIELD OF INQUIRY

Utterance. Disappearance.

Two tongues instruct. Slippery imminent mutable. Posit two tongues. Neither native, either mutating.

Erosion of the enunciating subject.

Language places the subject in process — plural, shattered.

Subject in the making. Subject on trial.

From a bare fist relational.

Sediment, variegation, wander, corpus — implications for a lyric notational yet flesh. Ground of the lyric as it registers the barely traceable, bearing force of perception, speculative and contoured.

Necessity and urgency of the poem enacting shape.

There is no composition, no singular trace — rather, a tracery, polysemous, multi-directional, emerging form.

176 Subject and Position

Proceed by every possibility, every erasure.

Colonial acquisition, colonial dissolution.

Origin. Derivation.

Disruption and returns.

This book or that

On the shore of America
Not a chronicle/not of
Domesticated story/arrive nowhere

Frame departure context

Fins and tails/ particulars of what world

It opened like this line on line

Ordinary speech and faltered

Fissure. Silence. Propertyless.
to enter the “new world”/skin/form
hair that grows daily/state of/having heard/least.

A rough approximation of relative positions.

Asked to display — her body, agent of labor, produce, labor,
meanwhile enter absence drain plug hole(d) — right to inhabitation/supreme ownership/superfluous ownership/ at that boundary/
at that degree/ to speak. She shows her teeth and tongue
that haven’t command.

Gesture the unsaid.

Hear that fly and *tung tung tung tung*: hear the rummaging and shifting: altered altercate: the breaking broken attend: attendant relying residue: who sings: affront: floor to ocean: *re re//her* up to the beat and asunder.

NICK LAWRENCE

POETIC AS A MODE OF ATTENTION.

HOME
 SEXUALITY HISTORY READING PERFORMANCE
UTOPIA

förmung-through-performance
 history-of-intake
 reading-the-outtakes

It is
 became true

Adorno: "In his text, the writer sets up house." "For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live." But just as method provides no standpoint/shelter in which to dwell, so the necessities of contemporary textual life force an intellectual nomadism on the writer, dismantling the edifice she has constructed with writing's materials. "In the end, the writer is not even allowed to live in his writing." Not having a place from which to work becomes the work's point of departure.

A relation, relaying, coming together as meeting: convening *before* convention. How we touch and organize. Lifting text out of texture.

Yet the necessarily damaged and makeshift residences of writing do not exempt it from the dynamics of self-location and location of its audience; the lack of a permanent address as authoritative position makes all the more necessary a formulation of address in its relational sense. Address in its spatial dimension thus flows into a temporality that entails

acknowledging the constant uprooting of textual opportunity, the need for reconstituting the ground on which writing's subjects attempt to meet. When will I see you.

What eros might be in writing: the simultaneous friction of difference and its closeness (absorbed mutuality) in the charged synapses linking word to word, sound to sound, section to section, and all the hybrid combinations. Defining distance. Approaching understanding. Think of intimacy not as a given.

Value in agitated address, shaking up the positions of actor and audience, doer and seer, writer and reader—not in simulated dissolution, but by renewing attention to the constitutive nature of these roles, the pleasurable recognition of the contingency of relations, instability/indeterminacy finally realizable as social *value*. A two-way mirror overcome with flaws, nicks, radial cracks. Yet we still “come through” to and for each other.

De Certeau's analysis of reading as poaching sees the reader's substitution of her own world for that of the author's in the act of reading, insinuating her experience into that of the text and modifying both in the process, as a way to make the text a place where differences can live: “The readable transforms itself into the memorable....This mutation makes the text habitable, like a rented apartment.” A subversive, even erotic process, that nonetheless leaves intact the existing structure of ownership. Can we move from squat tactics to a renewed strategy of reclamation, reconvening the public space? Difference not covert but overtly acknowledged, out in the sunlight?

Those who repeat the lessons of history are condemned to remember them and get an A on the exam: *Nach vie vor*, now as before: acknowledging that as the world approaches the condition of a closed/unified circuit of capital communications, issues of specified, localized address/position/identity get raised all the more fiercely. Collisions over coalitions. And the wreckage continues to pile up at our feet. Just the facts: a police genre as composed on the spot, on the stair going down, on the premise of recollection accompanying smashed purpose. Slow, like a sober farce. Seated rows of lessons face the question. The transformation of text into social action, action into text.

Language as network: terminals no longer such, but rather nodes, axons between synapses, the thread of legibility logging us on to a universe of winking signs: access. Many still don't have machines of course, and many more can barely find the

Return key. Literacies piled on literacies. A technology of extension itself needs to be extended. And returned: the new communications technology accelerates a pseudoformalist replacement of social relations, "rules for use" substituting for context-sensitive ethics. An ethics of reading as relation, face to face with possibility in language. Where home is nowhere but in going out.

KEVIN MAGEE

MARKET TENDER FAMILY

I

"Yes, language. In spite of everything." Why the boat in the poem arrives, unannounced, and then this morning the discovery that in German the rhyme Boot/Bote discloses the messenger, that it was the Messenger that had arrived, summoning, not the word for boat. *The Meridian*: "But do we not all write from and toward some such date? What else could we claim as our origin?"

A peasant's gaping exclamation, new dated from the terms that disappear, repeatedly constructed under conditions of which it can never claim (in place of the possibility of a subject, given the impossibility of the Subject) to write in the name of, and be haunted by, "proletarian," its agrarian origins (Marx: "above all, the separation of the laborer from the earth"): their extremity, a hand-to-mouth existence, the severity of whose deprivations and during that time neither did the mother smile at her child, nor did the child recognize her mother with a smile. The face stares out without a past. I am their scholar.

By him imprinted, woeful withal, that they be made Role, enter: carpenter, joiner, weaver, bellows mender, tinker and tailor. The first name on the roll call: "Nick Bottom, Weaver?" The production of a play is being parodied—see Brecht's discussion of *Coriolanus* with the actors (Adorno: "All roles may be played, except that of the worker"). *Bottom* is the 'class epic' begun in "A"-8 and "A"-9, transmuted; in the passage from

Piers Plowman in “A” -23 the picture crowds and blurs and dissolves in a chorus of street cries.

II

The text’s mobility simultaneously asserts the temporal contingency of the revised model under which the plowman is as silent and without agency as the plow guided by the exhausted, half-starved oxen, followed by such details as the plowman’s patched and knobby shoes from which the toes stick out or the little child crying in its crumb-bowl at the edge of the furrow, the mother’s bloody stumbling across the snow, marking the snow with her blood-stained footprints, the field as an open level tract of expropriated labor almost immediately allegorized.

The pages came to disturb as might a dream, abrupt transitions and juxtapositions and dark meanderings, exposed seams where new material has been patched by revisers, each misconstruing and enlarging on a predecessor’s work, layered assemblages the mark of several hands that nameless who wrote it invoke successive spatial configurations without tending to the transitions between them: how the poem suffers the contradictions of its own illusions, the tortured and tormented side of its thought, even as the mother cries out against the child in her lap, clinging together like two letters in a word.

III

Chaplinesque. “Are you the father?” “Sort of.” Then must show the cop the note, her writing that orphans (in the form of a plea addressed to the unknown) the Kid, who does it belong to, inserted into a set of malevolent relations, for money dissolves all bonds of nature: the scene in the flophouse where by the ruse of paying for only one they pretend to be as one and mime the mother’s loss—parody is his relation to the child, is why the mother must be found.

The memory of an ancient injury persists—the change in the sense of page from disjunctive to integrative—and of that idea about the comparative unimportance of authorial identity, when a book is designated a legitimate object there is a limit (is there a limit?) to which the book can be used, at heart is the issue of property, pirating, “light-shonning theft,” the use to which the

Book can now be put: we are tearing the pages out and bearing new linkages to be made and new political meanings to be constructed.

As when one word rubs up against another, which force needs leeway, license, larceny, propensity for what is not there—the gesture of the woman in the scene of Balaam (who can only be read in the blank spaces left between the signs of her own mimicry)—writing without every sound in the house can be heard from hand moving pen whether to anyone or not if not that strangeness manifested after the writing is made, must (will) provisionally refer—after hazarding all—her dream of an unmediated language, the primacy of sound, chains wave and pronominal flood of figure from the pen so rigorously kept from them.

IV

Metal-tipped share of beech or oak a variety of wild sorrel called salt grass mixed with wheat and rye with only the impaired memory of the most impoverished, reduced, depleted, exhausted effort to answer to a cultural imperative, Della Volpe's 'declarative ideological commitment,' its stringent method and model of a geneological tree, the problem of producing an appropriate—that is 'class appropriate' and therefore politically useful—representation. *But we just don't speak the same language.* Albertine: "A miller has no need to say he's a miller, you can see the flour all over his clothes and the mark of the sacks he has carried on his back."

For some time I served Sim at the Nook then with such wrath my wages made they took away my tankard and my torn sheet is there no sweet can assuage such swelling my breast blown up for bitter of gall heart-rending to hear the reckoning when we must read accounts, election belongs to love and learning and I must live till Lammas-time walled in a cloud he walked among the workmen and no one saw him there a thousand of them chained together, I would walk beside you and walk along the way with you, working and wandering as we are asked.

INVECTIVE VERSE

In these times it is easy to become uselessly polemical when given the choice between the right wing and fighting against the right wing. And in this bind we are debating on “where poetry comes from,” or what is its “use value.” I’m not sure if I want to know where poetry comes from. I do know that if I were to describe what goes through my mind when I write I’d be ceaselessly ridiculed and no one would ever speak to me again. As far as use value goes, I say stop sulking about being misunderstood, ignored, or having to fight for your unique aesthetic and look around you. There is a specter haunting poetry, and it’s not *The Paris Review*. Now I do not deny that discussions about poetry, whether aesthetic, political, or both, are useful and interesting, but considering the state of things in the world we should put down that cup of coffee and start getting angry. Let us assume time is limited and forget about defining the creative process or trying to determine the value of poetry, after all it keeps happening in spite of (or because of) MTV and rampant social injustice. Let us heave no more sighs unless we are falling in love. We should be disgusted with our boredom considering spring and all the beauty of this privilege we have called poetry. We should not assume, however, that our vision of “truth” (though we may stupidly think it’s the right one) will be heard simply because it’s in poetic form. Even screaming from the roof tops “We are telling the truth!” doesn’t mean anything unless a million people do it. I know some of us feel unduly isolated since poetry is pretty much ignored, but we aren’t alone. We’re in the same stew as other ignored ideas, arts, and people who are unfairly driven to a preoccupation with the question “who the fuck are we anyway?” But just because we are poets doesn’t mean we should simply give up, as though we were “kept” lovers, what little power we do have by crawling into an abyss of solipsism or expecting some greater power to change our lives. Instead we should annoy the power mongers by using poetic propaganda to launch a ruthless critique of them and their buddies and to expose the world of contradictions surrounding us. For poetry, my friends, is like a sit-in at the luncheonette of language, and we should refuse to get up and walk

across the street to the “poets only” diner. Poetry is the insistence that we partake in the *expression of our lives*, in all their various contexts and manifestations. The importance of this freedom is paramount and we must insist upon it by demanding money and support from the state and demanding free distribution of all independent poetry publications. Having won these goals we should categorically refuse to be insular or troubled. We can forget about money by making the wealthy reinstitute a benefactor economy (until after the revolution), that way we can have their money as well as infiltrate their homes and insult them at their cocktail parties. You are probably wondering “but what shall we wear?” I say whatever you want, but come in style or drag out those accessories and suede shoes, then we’ll all go out afterwards for pie in the sky. We must also capture back the public domain for poetry! Let us insist on writing all freeway signs, tax forms and public awareness leaflets. Let’s then stop sending poems to *Sulfur* magazine and journals like it. Let’s all change our names every few months and see if anyone publishes us. Let’s stop being ugly bags of mostly narcissism and start picking fights with those who would have us fight against ourselves.

RANDALL POTTS

NOTES TOWARD A CONSTRUCTION OF AGENCY

1. There is no point to begin with.
2. To talk of language outside of language is impossible.
3. ...a succession of attempts to recapture an inaccessible...
4. A weight of color hangs over the trees.
5. ...some ersatz sacred behind which to shelter power...
6. Syntax represents claims made in language.
7. This is not a description.
8. What is perception apart from language.
9. ...expresses power’s seizure of the totality...
10. A language can conceal itself as love.
11. The space of relation is a political space.
12. By virtue of some economy.
13. ...a struggle for the construction of everyday life...
14. Privileged syntactical space.

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15. The trees so yellow.
16. In what age belong these trees.
17. ...the spectacle is nothing but desacralized and fragmented myth...
18. The state of language.
19. Each construction simply a possibility of language.
20. ...where forced labor is transformed into voluntary sacrifice...
21. Many have decided to be right & therefore immortal.
22. If silence is the first conceit he is alone.
23. Constructions subject to revision, deletion and cancellation.
24. ...in a world where needs are determined by power...
25. The waves insist something.
26. The self is an object of language.
27. ...of which subjectivity can only participate...
28. There are many correspondences for anger.
29. A word begins a avalanche.
30. In text, words spatially related.
31. ...a right to property from which they are excluded...
32. ...is bound to the survival of his privileges...
33. He is repeating what he has heard.
34. Days lengthen but what is revealed.
35. ...implied the existence of boundaries, restrictions...
36. Time works as a set of analogies.
37. Agency implied in construction.
38. ...a living fragment of the right to possess...
39. It would be paranoid to speak of collusion.
40. ...are acknowledged only on the level of spectacle...
41. He is ambushed by sunlight.
42. To disclose a hierarchical address.
43. ...to renounce their lives on the pretext...
44. The sentence is over an overturned boat.
45. Selection is an act of agency, of self.
46. Someone is coughing on the back porch.
47. Buildings are painted to look like buildings.
48. ...the language of an era can follow the traces of revolution...
49. He has an impulse to confess more than is likely.
50. ...without transcendence, without ideologies, without myths...

LISA ROBERTSON,
CHRISTINE STEWART
AND CATRIONA STRANG

BARSCHET NATION

- A. WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT:
1. Dissensual language is a machine of enchantments.
 2. This machine, with all its archaisms, is a means of locomotion toward polysexual futures.
 3. Wrenched history is our machine's frontier.
- B. THE MACHINE IS THE NATION:
- Borders:** We cannot contain our pleasure.
- Language:** Stolen without ransom.
- Trade Policy:** Those whose fantasies condemn them.
- Currency:** We have no currency.
- Constitution:** Camped in the hinterland, basking in the rectitude of our intentions, we renounce entropic capital; we renounce the bogus repertoires of gender; we renounce post-historical gloating; we renounce proscribed rebuttal of memory; we renounce boredom. We know that beyond the Fantasy Empire lurks an improbable nation of subjects composed of countless tendrils, each with a new little sensory tissue at its tip. We travel there.

JOE ROSS

AFTER THE FACT

Well then please have it understood I cannot be responsible for doubts.

—Gertrude Stein, from *Lifting Belly*

Poetry must be what it is after. Simply so. Written from the nearly secret source from which it came—that place where there are no borders—where every border is recognized to be open. There you approach without passport—wanting to say the single

sentence that becomes one life. It could kill if misstated—though it must be said. It floats there between two. One state and another. One to speak, one to be spoken of—there is no difference between either.

And hell yes, the stakes *are* this high—otherwise, why would anyone even try to begin to write? Truth matters. It's in the air again. Listen. You can hear it:

Then there were cries for more magic—
open up, This is magic.
Please one more magic trick.
A child's in delight.
Like lifting these words, to light. Like objects.
Were they *really* objects?

And too—the homework must be done! Poets need to know what has gone on before them and is currently going on around them (How few truly read). And to read so not as to be able to write/say the “correct” things and build a “career” (A career in poetry? Hell, be a lawyer) but rather to see if you *really* have something to say. Has it been said before. Has everything been said before? And if so—in what language has it been said? Are we a jaded generation? Can it be understood today? Do you feel a need to translate it? But then again—if you *do* find that what you’re after has been said—That’s Great! Relax! You don’t have to do it. See—it is long past time to end our jealousies—be supportive of one another—encourage those we encounter along the way.

We, when we look at our world (War, Disease, Famine, Oppression, Bigotry,...) need now more than ever to join together and do something about our conditions. I don’t mean to sound like an alarmist—I am well aware that these conditions have always been part of Humankind—but we are of a generation and in a country where we have the resources to make a difference (And hasn’t that always been a major part of the *why* of poetry?). What other generation of writers really could—were in a strong enough country where if they could convince their citizenry and government to act—actually had the technology and resources available to make a change?

Face it—we *are* in a position of privilege—regardless of how “left out” we may feel as artists. We are alive at a time and in a

place where we can make poetry truly matter. This is a media age. We have all been raised in the midst of it. It is senseless to turn away from our technologies—in fact, the opposite is historically true, poets and artists have traditionally been among the first to openly embrace and use innovative forms of communication—and it is *all* about communication anyway. Yes, the page matters. We recognize it as a construct—artifice—we as writers will always start from there—(Poet = To Make). But what we do next is what will *make* a difference, and hopefully as Bateson says, a difference that makes a difference.

It is time to give America a soul. That is all that I personally have ever attempted to do with my work. It is time not to look to write works that move people but rather to write works that make people move. The world waits, though impatiently.

So, let's say thank you to all who have gotten us this far. Those innovators and experimenters who have cleared the page for us to fill again—The matter now is *content*—The content is the *human us*—which together makes the *we*—who must make—Works Which Work in the World.

ROD SMITH

“EACH MAN IS ISOLATED BY DESIGN & LAWS IN HIS PERCEPTION OF THE OPAQUE.”

What is poetic is necessarily defined by what is not.

it's not a _____, it's an adventure.

One learns to write just as one learns any other thing, with time, attention, effort, & luck. In this sense it is not so mysterious.

At one time I was interested to find a method of composition which compelled synchronicity. I am no longer interested in that.

A process:

1. Avoid an ending design.
2. Accept inviolability.
3. Epitomize &/or eroticize.

Caution: Doing both can result in self-destruction.

4. Define (*i.e.* experience) inviolability as “the impenetrable aspect.”
5. Read Deleuze through a Buddhist lens.
6. Proofread the government of.
7. “affix”
8. The universe retaliates.
9. Ingest retaliation.
10. Repeat.

things break up, the horizon jumps around.

Since sense is *made*: primacy of sound: leads to a perceptual (conceptual) density which is true to the life lived.

The interior is only a selected exterior.

The exterior, a projected interior.

Compile a book of constitutions.

Sculptural improvisation plus learned intuition. breathing.

The longer you breath the more you know about poetry.

Optimism, about any social possibility = radical negativity.

The next punks might believe things will get better.

Simultaneously constructive & deconstructive. Always wrestling with the child-proof cap of ideology. Use form against content.

Equate contingency with noise, the ever-present. Un-die. After all, music was abstract before we were.

Use:

electric susceptibility. strangeness. image impedances. image intensifiers. Coolidge tubes. regenerative braking. oblique incidence. dependance arising. generalized coordinates. linear polarization. context smoothing. revelant perturbation. stress. interface. & thermal noise

in contemporary writing.

Gretchen Johnsen *Journal* 1979: “You think of sex as different in kind from other encounters. I think of it as different only in degree.” Substitute poetry for sex in this statement. This leads not only to the notion of poetry as an intensified experience of language, but also in the other direction, to all experience as poetic. & gives John Cage’s “out of a need for poetry” a new poignancy.

Electronic language is immaterial, like identity. Mark Poster: “If contestatory language is to emerge today, it must do so in the context of TV ads and databases, of computers and communications satellites, not in a culture of co-present talk or

consensual debate." This does not mean alternative writing is politically irrelevant. It does mean that any political implications will be played out within institutions of indoctrination (the universities).

Freedom *can* increase. Deconstruct bureaucracy as well as the *Norton Anthology*.

Cross disciplinary activity. Rubbing ideology against ideology. Methodology against methodology. What is available to us as tools, I mean the variety of ways of thinking, compared to what was available even thirty years ago, makes this a very exciting time to be writing.

Jasper Johns: "I can imagine a world without art, and it wouldn't be bad."

One can conceive of any work of art as a process of exclusions. Exception: Conceptual art piece in which one appropriates the entire universe, known & unknown.

Steven Wright: "I have a shell collection, maybe you've seen it—scattered on beaches all over the world."

SUSAN SMITH NASH

AN ALIEN DOUBLE IN POETICS

Julia Kristeva writes in *Strangers to Ourselves* (Columbia UP, 1991) that Freud's notion of an archaic, narcissistic self that refuses to be integrated, persists in our consciousness as an alien double. It seems likely to me that when a poet writes a poem, the surface of the poem immediately becomes the poet's alien double.

Can it be that this alien *double* functions in our consciousness as the place we understand death to begin? I'm not referring to *thanatos*, or death-drive, but something else. The margin between the writer and the text (the alien double) becomes the place where rupture begins.

The alien double forces the individual to self-consciousness, and thus, it recognizes when random *enonce* is marshalled into form & structure, when prayer is reduced to conditional narrative. Thus our double is psychically tormented with the rupture that we, while conscious, are only vaguely aware of. Our double

reacts to the daily death acts that rupture the inarticulatable essences of our transformative potential—first it rages against, and then it rejoices with reminders of the absolute death that lies ahead.

Reading Susan Howe, we begin to see what might happen if we try to approach this alien double by reshaping the surfaces of historical discourse, because such narratives are usually cast in terms of death. She creates text by not defying but integrating historical texts she finds in a cool New England library. As she selects texts, she merges democracy with relict Transcendental beliefs that are recorded like a seismic profile, and they reveal the structure of the subsurface of the earth. We know this through our collective “revolutionary ethos.”

Susan Howe links the alien double, death, and space. The double becomes *Eikon Basilike*, her explanations of power: in the center is the ghost of an absent king—this invokes issues of space (public & private). Can death translate into spatial issues as well?

So, to make it personal and to relate to my body—I am acquainted with my alien double, who whispers rupture and death at turns and hours, and I know the hydrologic flow that surges through the emotional core of power, how now I sit here watching, seeing the spaces it invades. It is breaking out now everywhere. In Nancy Fraser’s analysis (*Critical Inquiry*, Spring 92) of Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas, Fraser asks what structures of *inequity* underlie hegemonic understandings of categories of thought. It’s clear. Power’s flip side—inequity.

If you know where you are in relation to power, you know something about the spatial dimensions of surface. The alien double makes sure of this. Poetry’s dimensions can indicate the poet’s attitude about the dominant cultural values. Think of the dimensional aspect of poetics as architecture or a dislocated self. There is a coast. And a map of a harbor. Olson’s look at Samuel de Champlain’s 1606 map of Le Beau Port. There is an idea, echoing Danto, that dislocation takes place by means of an “outside” text and can be attributed to some metaphorical aspect of it.

So, “outside” texts can be our old texts—a “paleo” look at experience that takes on spatial dimensions. Through metaphor, the text moves, or “dislocates” the self. An implication of the process involves a “linguistic dislocation,” where in the process,

or evaluation of a paleo-text that is outside our experience becomes internalized. Thus, I see now a self, my self constantly in flux, at the mercy of the inner eye. Here I am, reading, constantly shaping impressions and generating meaning, by looking out the space of death, through the eyes of my alien double or an archetype's eyes.

CHRIS STROFFOLINO

NOTES ON TEXT AND SELF-REFERENTIALITY

Does the poem have to be a painter (farmer) for the poet to feel okay about having to know the title to *see* the painting (in the supermarket he shops at). Does the poem find nothing new in the sun the poet pretends to be under in order not to be bored? If the poem is more afraid to admit that it doesn't want to see you naked than it is to admit it wants to make love to you, is the poet a symbol for the moment you met me?

Nature is less the tenor of this vehicle than it is the happening in-between, an inbetweenness casting appearances and meanings, images and concepts, to either side of the street. All language is a tension between...The meaning that refers to anything outside itself is a fish out of water until put in doubt. Questioning must turn on itself with such rigor that in order to leave no stone unturned, the field of discourse must shrink. But I'm afraid I'll be called claustrophobic if I adhere to such demands, aren't I?

The poet is afraid s/he's boasting until the poem comes like a river that doesn't slow down when it approaches a town, a river that can't be weighted down by all the boats that would have to sink not to skim the surface. The poem,

My love is like a simile
indifferent to me
so I don't have to be.

comes like an enormous bill for a chintzy meal. The poet wants to see the doctor who, zeroing in on a patient's wounds, stumbles on his own, the only ones he can't heal, the only ones he can't feel without considering how

we'd all long for a world with only one sun if we lived on a world with two.

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It's neither all in the text nor in the structures of language that ostensibly precedes the text (unless language couldn't exist without a text, as potential couldn't exist without the one that's seen as actual, and the text itself is so unidentifiable that we must be talking from it if we talk about it). The text is as blinded, as much of a liar, as anything (hush-money, for instance). Some texts feel so guilty about this possibility that they can't bear it without claiming the "ontological priority" of a person, if not a body. I'd only be guilty of a pathetic fallacy if these ideas were original.

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Is it the poet or the poem that cries "Drought!" the second the deluge ends? If the shovel is surely sadder when used as a door-prop, then the poem is organized like a country in which fruitpickers feel guilty about all the pleasure they stole from the victims of yuppie-flu. If the poet spends so much of his conscious life dodging the bullets he could only dream of making, the poem derides him: "How should I expect you to see me as much of a success as I sometimes do until you admit I'm as much as of a failure as I sometimes do?"

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We're "only" a style away from each other. The text is only aware of its limitations as text in rare moments, but these are the most characteristic ones. They would not be possible without the moments where nature (by way of memories?) seems to thwart the self-referentiality of the text so effectively that the author made by the text is spared the stifling self-consciousness that prevents the possibility of an immediated feeling weighed by itself against a feeling it's reminded of, a feeling that seems to stem from different, and therefore knowable, circumstances. This is in stark contrast to the unknowable causes the text, a feeling that doesn't have to lead to actions because it is an action itself, stems from.

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Intermezzo— Is the poet an intellectual or a singer? Depends who you're talking to. Death'll lump us together, in blatant disregard of the distinction between symbolism and imagism, lyric and discursive modes, Romanticism and Modernism. But isn't it

possible that a writer whose followers (including himself) are convinced his work is to be valued for its idea content are really responding to a music that doesn't seem like music? It's old hat for poets to want to distinguish themselves from intellectuals. Mere reason, in the feigned frenzy of some journal entries that presume to be poems, is denigrated vehemently as if one were speaking of the Führer. Reason, "passion in drag" as some would have it, is motivated by extrinsic concern for worldly success, extolled and practiced only by those incapable of "lived experience." Yet who are those snide irrationalists to get the last word, especially if they save all their pure spontaneity for the sacred precincts of the recording studio.

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Now that I know my intentions were outstripped by the action, what stand should I (who have been so apt to identify with intentions) take against the action? Should I blame you for misunderstanding? Or is that blaming the victim after I've killed him, allegedly in self-defense? Can I take seriously any court that would hold up in: If I can consciously identify with the unknown action, it's not me you misunderstand; I haven't created a monster. The self that sees whatever's unintended in an utterance as a military monster can not be the best of me. The best, or even the rest, cannot be explained away by the intentions that would kill before conception if they could.

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The act, the text, outlives its intentions in possibility. The design includes the desires. There is a balance that can *never exist* in a specific moment, but only in the arc of time as it exists (not in memory or history, but) in the abstract boundlessness in which memory thrives so well it blurs into hopes and all that jazz. "OH, BUT WOE TO HE WHO NEEDS TO FEEL UNBALANCED TO FEEL ALIVE." Now, who tells me that?! Probably someone who lives closer to the refinery than to the crude, some Patriarch perhaps who assumes that thought stinks less than feeling, that thought can not be a womb, can only adopt, import, that only feeling's a farm and surely that's too linear...

ELIZABETH WILLIS

I want your poem to intrude and win me. I want my poem read careless and often. In the idiom of the town I was born in, girls were mistakes. I understood this to mean something akin to a welcome disaster, an interruption, an envoy. Poetry for me is a series of “mistakes” and negations, falls and recognitions. Mostly *to recognize*. Mostly *to fall*. I am amazed by the effects of half-light on a body. I am amazed by the substance of what a structure cannot contain.

Mostly my poems begin in the course of walking. I believe this site of motion, the physical arena of a body traversing a body of land, is inseparable from my desire to create a location, not holy but entire. Not transgressive, but boundless. Not of repose but of rescue. This is my interruption to cultural progress; this is the elbow I would draw in the mural; a desire for proportion outside of moral or aesthetic obedience; a wicked quip; a slip of the tongue; a kind helper; a forgotten or unspeakable missive.

THAD ZIOLKOWSKI

DOORPRIZE

My wish for this fumble at a poetics is that it somehow open the gift of attention, the going-away present, that becomes *poetry writing itself*.

But in saying so I forfeit the set of ways by which I might have attempted the giving without announcement, suppressing the utterance of that desire and hinging the whole instead on a door I would simply have passed through, for better or worse, as if it were Michaux’s conviction that even wanting to write a poem vitiates it.

The performance anxiety of all writing irresistably plays itself out in differing modes and degrees of self-acknowledgment, as in the occurrence or absence of the word “poem” within a poem.

Yet to “bear the device” bears now the quasi-ethical weight born of having become a requirement the fulfillment of which

would both implicate and absolve the maker of responsibility for seductions intrinsic to the art as well as for the inevitable failure to engage, to succeed “on its own terms,” however much these terms seek disappearance down the vortex set in motion by metapoetic lexicons.

Here, under the generic sign of “poetics,” and there, from line to line in the exponential elimination of options whose sum total is the poem, loss branches from the initial gesture and it is more than virtual.

Beginnings are infinite, but infinitely terminal.

Each direction’s angle takes its rise from sacrifice as actual as the tragi-comic finalities marking the indubitable nodes of a life.

If to exceed these is to live, then the poem is this excess, what remains after the exclusions each turn requires.

Thus Celan: “Poetry is a unique and fatal instance of language.”

The perennial dream of a self-generating, psychomimetic language indistinguishable from thought flows from the difference between the hang-time of a word and the otherwise irreversible events the sclerosis of sequentiality enforces.

For each line to be the first, be as the first, be as fresh as the first, the first word of the first line, or first line of the first letter, but without fetishizing freshness or firstness and so failing to be either, would entail renewal flowering from the carefully cracked skull of that hand-to-mouth existence.

Pauses propose the lines of inquiry.

The space of the fall from line to line is epistemological, but the potential of the subsequent word, limited to a single word, is metamorphic.

Hence the couplet, one in two, the optimalization of this falling toward transformation, a making as remaking through the next new word’s backsurge.

I thought that if I could put it all down, that would be one way—but whether spectral or actual, appropriation’s quotation marks render repetition the new entity immediately lost to past and present the inclusion in whose entirety it was to find redemption.

It is the curse, the privilege, the curse of the privileged, of my generation always to wonder about and what to do with the I, that interface mediating antitheses. But then one day

196 Subject and Position

I did it my way!
I really did.
Just as I'd heard it would be.
Forever and ever.

Cupiditas rerum novarum.

Greed for new things, new forms disguised under Darwinian
adaptation to the puzzles and perils of capitalism.



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